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### Thesis

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Migration, the family and apartheid: journeys that span  
geographic space, the life course and responses to political  
change

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of DOCTOR  
OF PHILOSOPHY in the discipline of Psychology  
at the Open University

By

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BA (Hons) MSc (Clin Psych)

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## **Abstract**

The thesis indicates that, to make sense of how white South African migrants and their non-migrant kin construct their views about migration from apartheid-based South Africa, it is important to take account of apartheid-based racialization as well as prior histories of displacement and oppression. It demonstrates the need to move beyond globalized notions of the family when researching constructions of the consequences of migration. This includes considering how such constructions inform and are informed by: prior family dynamics; life course changes; gender; whether the relationship under discussion is with a parent, child or sibling; whether the views are expressed by a migrant or non-migrant; and responses to the dismantling of apartheid. It highlights the value of adopting a narrative-based biographical interpretative methodology and combining social constructionist and psychoanalytic ideas when investigating issues that have been under theorized and under researched, are troubling to articulate and concern relationships with people who came to be seen as racialized and/or gendered 'others'.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This research explores how white<sup>1</sup> South Africans, who live apart from some of their close family, construct the impact of migration on their sense of self, family and positionings in the societies in which they live. It uses an adapted version of biographical interpretative narrative methodologies (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000; Rosenthal, 1993, 1998) in analyzing excerpts selected from interviews with eleven migrants and nine non-migrants.

The focus is on how white South African migrants and non-migrants construct their experiences of migration. The demographics of the South African population, highly racialized nature of the country under apartheid, and dismantling of apartheid mean that these migrations offer a forum for considering how constructions of self, family and migration are informed by oppressive

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<sup>1</sup> The terms black, white and coloured are not empty. They signify the replication of oppressive racializing practices. However, they are used here without quotation marks to signify their defining role under apartheid as both problematic and taken for granted. With the exception of where I quote participants use of the terms 'coloured' and Indian, black is used to refer to people classified as 'non-white' in South Africa.

political belief systems and the collapse of a regime that sustained such belief systems.

The ideologies that are characteristic of apartheid-based South Africa and Britain are far from similar. However, current debates within the British media and political forums reflect a preoccupation with whether or not migration and multiculturalism is damaging to this society and a tendency to use increased levels of migration to justify racism (Goodhart, 2004; Phillips, 2004). By focusing on how racism permeated family life in apartheid-based South Africa, I hope that this research will shed light on experiences of racialization that underpin understandings of other forms of migration to and from Britain.

The research is informed by my clinical experience as a systemically trained family psychotherapist. Work in Britain and post-war Kosovo has heightened my awareness of the importance of considering how migrant and non-migrant kin position themselves in relation to political conflict. It has given me some understanding of how these conflicts affect the ways family members balance the pulls between remaining emotionally connected to those who live elsewhere and establishing new relationships and social networks in the places in which they are located (Altschuler, Agnoni, Halitaj and Jasiki, 2002). My interest in this issue has also been informed by working with families facing a different form of disruption to anticipated lives, situations in which a parent has a life-limiting physical medical condition (Altschuler and Dale, 1999).

However, as I and my younger brother migrated from South Africa, my daughter is currently working in the United States and my mother and all four grandparents migrated from Lithuania to South Africa, the research reflects a more personal desire to make sense of how histories of migration have informed our experiences of what it means to be a family. In common with other white people, I and my family were accorded a racially privileged position in South Africa. Therefore, this research is also motivated by a desire to understand the impact of our privileged status on how we have dealt with the challenges posed by our decisions to leave or remain in South Africa. It reflects a desire to make sense of how we use our “capacity for identification with others to either further or impede our recognition of others, to bridge or obfuscate differences between us” (Benjamin, 1998, p xii-xiii). This includes an interest in extending understandings of how multiple and potentially contested “signifiers of identity slide into one another in the articulation of power” (Brah, 1996, p185) and inform how white South Africans respond to and account for the identity and relational consequences of migration.

This initial chapter is divided into two sections. The first locates the research and the questions I aim to address in terms of apartheid and my positioning as a white South African and systemic psychotherapist. It provides a background to the decision to focus the analysis on how constructions of migrations have been informed by apartheid, and how memories and imaginings of apartheid inform and have been informed by interpersonal and intra-psychic experiences of family.



The second provides an overview of the research and initial statement of ideas that are addressed in greater depth in the subsequent theoretical, methodological, data analytic and concluding chapters.

## **1.1 Locating the Research**

The research questions are situated in three areas: apartheid and its collapse, movements across geographic space and my own positioning. They have been designed to address gaps in research and theorizing migration and how relationships between white South African migrants and their non-migrant kin were constructed through the power relations of racialization.

As a result, particular attention is paid to how the research participants move between political discourses, and discourses that are deemed to be more personal, as they reflect on the consequences of deciding to leave or remain in South Africa.

### **1.1.1 Locating the research in terms of apartheid**

South African society has long been characterized by cultural, racial and political diversity. Racist ideologies were a part of life well before the Nationalist government assumed power in 1948 (Beinart, 2001; Saunders and Southey, 1998). For example, it was under British colonial rule that the Native's Land Act

(1913), restricting black ownership of land to 7% of the total population, and the Immorality Act (1927), forbidding all sexual relationships between people of different races, were passed.

Between 1948 and 1994, when the Nationalist government was in power, a series of additional laws was adopted, enshrining apartheid-based racialization as central to the ways in which identities and relationships were constructed. These laws and a system of state censorship were used to ensure that, although whiteness conferred significant social and economic advantages, it remained unmarked. Amongst the earlier laws passed were the Population Registration Act (1950), requiring all citizens to be registered according to racialized criteria; the Group Areas Act (1950), creating separate residential areas for each racial grouping and requiring relocation of residency; the Suppression of Communism Act (1950), allowing for the repression of all opposition; the Pass Law (1952), requiring black people to carry identity documents attesting to residence and work permit; and the Bantu Education Act (1963), introducing an inferior education system for black people. Subsequent legislation gave the government the power to impose detention without trial for an unlimited duration, for example, the Unlawful Organizations Act (1963), Terrorism Act (1967) and later Riotous Assembly and Internal Security Acts of 1975 and 1976.

Under apartheid, state repression resulted in escalating violence and human rights abuses. A strict system of censorship meant that opposition voices were

largely silenced, at least in print, so that by the late 1980s over 30,000 works had been banned (Saunders and Southey, 1998). Despite this, growing numbers of South Africans across 'race', gendered and class lines found ways of recording their experiences of life under apartheid, including experiences of the forced removal of black people from areas that became designated as white, and of how the elision of class and 'race' meant that apartheid was consolidated through the employment of migrant black men in the mines and migrant black women in the homes of white people (Beinart, 2001; Cock, 1989; Cock, Emdin and Klugman, 1990; Coullie, Meyer, Ngwenye and Olver, 2006). However, the dominance of apartheid ideologies, censorship and benefits of racialized privilege meant that these views tended to be subjugated or refuted in the interests of maintaining the racialized status quo.

One way of understanding the relatively unquestioned nature of racialized privilege relates to the effectiveness of the apartheid system. Most white people were largely insulated from the lives of black people. Few had direct dealings with black migrant mine workers, or visited the places to which black people were confined, namely areas outside of the main white towns (townships) and rural areas of residence (homelands). However, because the practice of employing black women to care for white children was widespread, most people did have direct contact with black domestic workers. This suggests that inattention to the violation of human rights during apartheid is likely to relate to conscious and unconscious racism.

Another way in which racialized privilege was maintained was through compulsory male military conscription (Batley, 2007; Cock, 1993, 1994; Israel, 2002; Thompson, 2006). Although the length of service varied over time, under apartheid all white men between the ages of 18 and 55 were required to serve an initial period of military service, followed by a series of additional 'camps'. From the 1970s onwards, young white men became increasingly unwilling to serve in the army. In 1989, 25% of conscripts called for a deferment, 38% applied for an exemption from serving in the townships and 15% failed to attend (Price, 1991). As outright refusal carried the risk of imprisonment, many chose to go into exile (Cawthra, Kraak and O'Sullivan, 1994). This led to the establishment of organizations like the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) in Britain.

The dismantling of official apartheid, which started with the release of Nelson Mandela and the first election in which all South African citizens were entitled to vote, transferred political power to the African National Congress (ANC), a party which represents the majority of the population. However, whites continue to wield considerable economic power. Amongst the decisions taken by the new government was the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 1999). The TRC has been instrumental to ensuring that the change in power was non-violent. It offered victims and perpetrators an opportunity to acknowledge and validate 'gross' abuses of power in the interests of maintaining

racialized privilege. Concerns have been raised about the aims and implementation of the TRC. One of the core concerns is that, in the interests of constructing a 'we' from what had previously been 'them' and 'us', it focused almost exclusively on 'gross' abuses of power rather than addressing how all citizens, particularly whites, were positioned and implicated in maintaining racialized privilege (Elkins, 2000; Norval, 1999; Rose, 2003; Schaap, 2001, 2003).

Nonetheless, initiatives like the TRC have thrown racialized constructs into relief: rather than racist categories representing absolutes, more people are now aware that they represent cultural relatives, socially specific frames that entrench asymmetries in power and privilege. White people who had staked much of their identity on racialized privilege find their power diminished in a country that is redefining itself as African (Andrews, 2007; Nuttle and Coetzee, 1998; Steyn, 2001). Change in the meanings assigned to racialized categories has not necessarily had a corresponding influence on understandings of self and Other amongst all white South Africans. Nor has it meant that they cannot draw on racialized categories in constructing identities and relationships. However, it has meant that internal controls have had to be set in place, requiring a censoring of racist thoughts and speech that are now deemed inappropriate when warranting identity claims (Billig, 1999).

### **1.1.2 Locating the research in terms of migration**

People are likely to have left South Africa for a combination of economic, political and social reasons (Myburg, 2004; Polonsky, Scott and Suchard, 1988, 1998). As the state intervened so heavily in social and economic life, it is difficult to disentangle the different reasons for migration (Israel, 1999; Unterhalter, 2000). Although all of these reasons may at some level relate to apartheid, they do not necessarily reflect shared views about apartheid and its impact on self and others.

With media coverage of apartheid, British people probably know more about South Africa than any other country in Africa. However, little is known about those South Africans who live in Britain. South Africans have featured very little in the literature on transnationalism, a literature devoted to exploring how migrants and their non-migrant kin deal with a sense of family that is located in more than one geographic space and spans more than one nationality.

There are no reliable statistics of how many South Africans moved to Britain during apartheid. One possible explanation for the relative invisibility may be that exit from South Africa and entry into Britain was often illegal. There is a considerable disparity between the official South African figures, which indicate that 29,000 settled in Britain between 1984 and 1993, and the 70,000 claimed in the British 1991 census. Both figures are regarded as an underestimate and many, including myself, moved to Britain before 1984. However, because these

figures indicate that thousands migrated, the invisibility is unlikely to be explicable on the basis of underreporting alone. Mamdani (1996) argues that apartheid represents the generic form of the colonial state in Africa. Consequently, the invisibility may reflect ambivalence about Britain's colonial past, the preferential treatment given to white immigration applications and unfounded assumptions that the migration of white people is unproblematic (Israel, 1999).

Several South African-born emigrants to Britain, like Cohen (1994) and Segal (1963) have made important contributions to theorizing race relations and diaspora. However, until recently, they omitted to address white migrations from South Africa or the effects this might have had for families (Israel, 1999). This omission may reflect a desire to prioritize the plight of migrants who have been disadvantaged by racialized and socio-economic asymmetries in power. However, it may also reflect ambivalence about bringing the more personal struggles of white families into increased visibility, such as what it means to live elsewhere when parents become increasingly frail, and how experiences of apartheid infused experiences of family.

In attempting to make sense of the invisibility, it is important to recognize the contradictory positions migration has occupied in the psyche of the South African population. Under apartheid, white history was premised on the belief that the country was a haven against religious and political oppression. Examples include

the flight of the French Huguenots, the 'Great Trek' of Afrikaner settlers and the migration of Jews from Eastern Europe and Germany (Saunders and Southey, 1998). In discussing the migration of Jews from Eastern Europe, Kaye/Kantrowitz (1996) argues that migration to the United States offered a chance to escape from the 'darkness' with which they had been associated before. White people who went to South Africa might not have anticipated apartheid. However, the 'invention' of whiteness as superior in the socio-economic structure provided an identity that ensured that the social formation brought about by European expansion was in their best interests (Balibar, 1990).

Although white South African migrations have attracted relatively little academic attention, there are important exceptions. Publications that focus on migrations to Britain include Bernstein's (1994) description of interviews with political exiles and their children, Unterhalter's (2000) analysis of the fictional and autobiographical accounts of migrant black and white South African women writers, and Israel's (1999) analysis of the position of political exiles, in which he shows how the meta-identity of exile served to mediate the multiple demands and losses incurred through migration. However, all three publications focus primarily on the positions of politically active migrants and do not address the experiences of non-migrant kin.

The transition to a democratic South Africa has led to increased interest in migrations to and from the country, as exemplified in publications of South



African Migration Project (SAMP). To date, SAMP has paid most of its attention to the migrations of black people within South Africa, and to and from Central and North Africa. The main exceptions have been the analysis of what has been termed the 'brain drain' and the economic significance of outward flows of people (Crush, McDonald and Williams, 2000; Mattes, Crush and Richmond, 2000; Tyler, 2007). Other researchers have focused on the dilemmas and opportunities posed by migrating to particular localities such as Australia (Beer, 1998; Polonsky, Scott and Suchard, 1989, 1998; Rule, 1990, 1994; van Rooyen, 2000) or the migration of certain cultural groupings, for example Jews (Schoenfeld, McCabe and Schoenfeld, 1999).

To date, little consideration has been given to the consequences of racialized privilege for experiences and portrayals of migration. There are some exceptions as in a paper in which McCabe, Schoenfeld and Schoenfeld, (1999) explore how the intersection between gendered and apartheid-based identities informs migrants' responses to reduced access to affordable domestic help. Other exceptions include Sonn and Fisher's (1996) analysis of the consequences of leaving South Africa for people deemed 'coloured' under apartheid and Tatz, Arnold and Heller's (2007) more recent analysis of what they call the 're-migration' of South African Jews to Australia. However, Pollock's (1994) autobiographical analysis of memories of having been brought up by the combination of a white mother and black nanny is an insightful exception to the

predominant silence about the consequences of cross-racialized care for migrations from South Africa.

In contexts in which a public or academic discourse is absent, it is often possible to learn more through the narrating of fiction and autobiography (Coullie, Meyer, Ngwenya and Olver, 2006; Leveson, 2000). This is because it is less likely to attract the same level of censorship. Moreover, as it tends to focus on the experience of particular individuals, it is able to offer insight into the 'troubled subject positions' (Wetherell, 1998) individuals negotiate in managing the differences between personal experience and what Bruner (1990) calls 'canonical' narratives, assumptions of what is acceptable to say and do in their particular local and national culture.

As Coullie, Meyer, Ngwenya and Olver (2006) suggest, much of the white post-apartheid literature is structured as a form of confessional, as if attempting to present a split from an earlier, less politically enlightened, version of self. The notion of confessional is particularly applicable to Krog's (1998) account of the proceedings of the TRC, an account that moves between journalistic reporting, autobiography and poetry. Unterhalter (2000) draws attention to this notion in her analysis of fictional and autobiographical writing. She argues that although geographic relocation may have signified a desire to escape from the implicit positioning as oppressor, in many cases, moving seemed unable to remove the 'stain' of racialized privilege. The desire to account for the apartheid past is evident

in the ways in which migration is portrayed in the novels of Cartwright (2002), the plays of Fugard (2002) and Gien (2002) and auto-biographical writing of Gordon (1992), Jacobson (1985, 2000), Slovo (1998) and Wolpe (1994).

As Jewish identity claims are treated as a particular context for considering how access to alternate sites of identity could be used and referenced, it is important to note that most of the earlier publications devoted to Jewish migrations to South Africa avoided references to the political context. They positioned black South Africans as integral but largely unmentioned elements in adjusting to life in a new context (Leveson, 2000). However, a few Jewish authors did venture into this area, including Gordimer (1963, 1971), Jacobson (1995) and Sher (1989).

### **1.1.3 Locating my position as a researcher**

Current methodological and psycho-social theorizing requires an examination of the researcher's own position in relation to the issues under investigation (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; Lincoln and Guber, 1994; Reissman, 2002; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996). Two factors are particularly important to mention: my position as a white South African who left the country in 1977 and as a systemically based clinical psychologist and family psychotherapist.

In common with the people I interview, I am a white South African and I have lived most of my adult life in Britain, a country that is different to where my

parents and siblings live. The timing of my migration, 1977, was determined by my intention to complete a professional training as a clinical psychologist before leaving. However, it took place at an important point in the history of South Africa: the year before, 1976, was marked by a significant increase in anti-apartheid activism and in the deployment of military force to counter opposition. This was exemplified by the use of military force to quash the protest of black children against the inferior standard of black education, protests that have been termed the SOWETO riots after the South Western Townships in which the students lived. Since military service was compulsory for all white men from the age of 18, had we stayed, conscripts including my husband, would have been required to take a more active stance in suppressing anti-apartheid opposition.

Hirschman (1970) argues that members of any organization, business, nation or other form of human grouping have two ways of responding when the organization to which they belong demonstrates a decrease in quality or benefit to the member: they can 'exit', withdraw from the relationship, or 'voice', work towards repairing or improving relationships by communicating complaints, grievances or proposals for change. If the discomfort relates to increased political repression, the choice is likely to translate as exiting or protesting. However, exit need not be physical as it is possible to withdraw mentally or emotionally without leaving a country.

There is likely to be an interaction between exit and voice: greater opportunities for voicing feedback and criticism may reduce the desire to exit, just as the stifling of dissent may mean that departure appears to be the only way to express opposition. In the early seventies, I viewed migration as a way of expressing opposition against apartheid and distancing myself from my implicit positioning as racially privileged and oppressive. In contrast, I viewed remaining as condoning racialized privilege or requiring expressions of opposition that would not only be risky for me, but for my family and the children I hoped to have.

At the time, I also regarded my identity as a Jew as qualifying my positioning as a white South African. In common with 70% of the South African Jewish population, my family migrated from Eastern Europe, Lithuania, in the hope of escaping anti-Semitism and securing a better future. Stories about their migration and the ways in which their non-migrant family were treated by the Nazi's heightened my awareness of the politics of inclusion and exclusion. It introduced the idea that identity and belonging need not be confined to a particular geographic locality, and that it is possible for families to survive and even thrive transnationally.

Like many of the people I interviewed, my views about migration have shifted in response to experiences like becoming older, my father's death, my daughter's decision to work abroad and the dismantling of apartheid. These transitions have confronted me with aspects of migration I had underplayed before. They forced

me to realize that by prioritizing the political reasons for leaving South Africa, I underplayed the disruption migration posed to the relationships I and my family might otherwise have had. They have also led to recognizing that a family legacy of migration means that the template my children draw on in constructing their sense of self and family allows for the possibility of their moving away too.

I mention my position as a way of acknowledging that this subjective experience informs the ideas I draw on in researching white South African migrations to Britain. Rather than treating my positioning as a form of bias, I have tried to ensure that my own positioning, and its impact on the processes of interviewing and analyzing the data, is as visible as possible. As such, the analysis does not only draw on current theorizing or clinical experience. It draws on my insider knowledge of what it has meant to be a white South African; an emigrant to Britain; a Jew in South Africa; a daughter, sister and mother who lives apart from close family; and to have been cared for by a black nanny.

Nonetheless, a researcher can never be fully conscious of what one's various positions mean to the participants or one's self. Debates about the value of insider and outsider-based research are central to current psychological and sociological theorizing (Lentin, 2000; Stanley, 1993, 1996). These debates centre on proposals that insiders have greater access to culturally relevant knowledge while outsiders are more able to maintain an objective stance. However, the validity of "a Cartesian separation between observer and observed" (Morsy,

1988, p75) is widely questioned. As Raj suggests, this division is based on the sense of 'otherness' that continues to pervade academic scholarship and ignores the "messy connections and overlapping disjunctions" between the observer and observed (2003, p12).

This debate is relevant to all forms of qualitative research, particularly if it is predicated on the social constructionist view that all knowledge is situated and constructed. However, it has added significance in this context because the research is concerned with how transnational subjects, like myself, experience, imagine and negotiate the dualities of our positions as insiders and outsiders in presenting accounts of staying put and dispersal, abandoning and being abandoned, whiteness and blackness, and identifying and dis-identifying with positioning as racially privileged. As such, it has been important to recognize that, in exploring issues that have been relatively silenced, I may unwittingly silence, or bring to voice, other issues.

Before discussing the structure of the thesis, it is relevant to comment on my engagement with social constructionist and psychoanalytic ideas. Much of my clinical work has been informed by systems theories, an approach that has considerable overlaps with and has been informed by social constructionism. I was drawn to this approach for several reasons. My training as a psychologist was dominated by a theory I found overly mechanical, behaviourism. The framework presented as an alternative, psychoanalysis, was dismissed as

unscientific and unable to stand up to academic scrutiny. Although I was drawn to some psychoanalytic ideas, I felt the theory's preoccupation with the dyadic relationship between mother and child failed to take account of my sense that my own psychological development was bound up with relationships with my father, three siblings and particular members of my extended family as well.

To understand the development of systemic ideas, it is important to note that they were forged in opposition to the taken for granted view that families represent the sum and layering of individual psyches and of a therapeutic milieu dominated by an individual (primarily intrapsychic) approach. This is likely to account for why, although many early proponents of the approach were trained psychoanalysts, with important exceptions (Boszormeni-Nagi and Framo, 1965; Byng-Hall, 1985, 1995), aspects of therapy that were particularly identified with psychoanalysis, such as the therapeutic relationship and inner experience, tended to be marginalized in the interests of developing a different approach. This does not mean that these issues did not influence clinical practice but that they were not theorized as central to the process of change.

However, concerns about gaps in the approach, such as its relative neglect of how clinical issues and interactions in the here and now are affected by events in the past and of experiences that remain un-languaged, led me to engage more with what psycho-analytic ideas might offer clinical practice. This interest became stronger during the course of the research as I became more interested in



exploring how constructions of migration were informed by experiences that took place prior to the development of language, and in particular, the embodied nature of the relationship between the white child and her or his white mother and black nanny. I also became more aware of the value of using the psychoanalytic notion of a defended subject to theorize how subjects invest in the discourses they draw to protect themselves from anxiety and to support their identity claims (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000).

My interest has also been informed by an increased engagement with psychoanalytic ideas by other systemic psychotherapists. Drawing simultaneously on gender theory, psychoanalysis, systems and social constructionism, Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg and Walker (1990) argue that the layering of ideas from different traditions need not lead to the irresolvable contradictions debates within the field of systemic therapy suggest. Popock (2008) contests this by arguing that particular theoretical ideas have cultural traditions that can not easily be transcended. Flaskas (1996) suggests an alternate approach. She argues for the need to look for interactions with analytic ideas rather than attempting to integrate them into the systemic context. She suggests that applying psychoanalytic concepts in a tentative and conditional way can allow for a different understanding without neglecting the systemic project at hand and that an appreciation of the differences between these frameworks is as essential in guiding how to apply concepts like transference, countertransference and projective identification to systemic work.

These views influenced my decision to theorize the subject as making meaning in and through discourse as well as external and internal experiences of relationships. However, greater familiarity with systemic theory means that there is un-evenness in the extent to which I draw on systemic and psychoanalytic ideas in analyzing the data. Although I link these two theories, I have not attempted to create an over-riding meta-theory.

## **1.2 The Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter 2, '**Mapping the theoretical domain**', is divided into two sections. The first outlines the epistemological and ontological framework and acts as an introduction to subsequent discussions about methodology. It provides the theoretical rationale for the decision to draw on social constructionist and psychoanalytic ideas in exploring how wider social processes and family dynamics inform responses to the pull between a unitary sense of identity and experiences of multiplicity and contradiction.

Drawing on the work of Barthes (1994), Bruner (1986, 1990, 2004) and Ricoeur (1984), it locates the research in terms of an epistemology that treats narrating as a way of organizing, codifying and capturing what is experienced, and of constraining, humanizing and giving spurious contingent perceptions a context. It is predicated on the idea that meanings and realities are negotiated and shared between people, and that narratives represent stories of experience rather than

mere descriptions of events (Gergen, 1985, 2001; Gergen and Gergen, 2006; Squire, 2008). It views the analysis of 'small stories', stories about everyday lives that are told in passing (Georgakopolou, 2006), as a way of making sense of how individuals deal with dilemmas and troubled subject positions in negotiating personal experience in the context of 'canonical narratives' (Bruner, 1990, 2004).

Particular attention is paid to the contribution of discursive interpretations of language to identity theories. The chapter discusses how displacing the subject from its privileged position in relation to knowledge led to focusing increased attention on the discourses that construct the subject or identity positions from which they make and have effects, thus altering understanding of agency and representation (Davies and Harré, 1990; Foucault, 1980; Hall, 1998; Wetherell, 1998). It also discusses how shifts in understanding language, identity and agency contributed to calls to think in terms of identification rather than identity, and racialization instead of 'race', giving 'race' and racism a formative rather than expressive place in political, social and psychic life (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004; Phoenix, 2004).

The chapter draws attention to the problematics of agency and the limitations of focusing primarily on language, particularly when researching situations where past understandings of self are likely to position narrators in troubled positions (Fuchs, 2002). Developments in theorizing identity are used in reviewing responses to loss and uncertainty (Aktar, 1994; Boss, 1991; Portelli, 1990, 2002),

and the relationship between personal and collective memory (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1999; Halbwachs, 1950; Hirsch, 1999; Lambeck and Antze, 1996; Wang, 2004). The first section of Chapter 2 ends by discussing the tension between the desire for what Spence (1982) calls historical and narrative truths.

The second part of the chapter reviews ideas that have emerged from the two main frameworks used to study migration, diaspora and transnationalism. It argues that as most South Africans can trace their ancestry to another country, the diasporic literature is useful because it offers a way of interpreting a sense of belonging that is grounded in movements that might have taken place over many generations. As the sample was confined to people who remained in contact with South Africa and non-migrant family, the transnational literature has much to offer too. It pays attention to how migrants and their descendants participate in family, social, economic, religious and political processes that extend across borders while becoming part of the places in which they settle (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004; Olwig, 2002). Attention is drawn to gaps in theorizing and researching migrations, for example to the relative invisibility of the experiences of non-migrants and siblings. It also reviews the limited research pertaining to South African migrations, as in the work of Bernstein (1994), Israel (1999) and Unterhalter (2000). Because the accounts of Jewish participants are used as a context for analyzing how access to alternative sites of identity informs migratory and apartheid-based claims, the chapter pays particular attention to the academic

treatment of Jewish migrations. This review provides the conceptual background to the decision to interrogate how histories of apartheid-based racialization inform white South Africans constructions of migration. As such, it acts as a precursor to subsequent discussions about methodology.

Chapter 3, '**Methodology**', discusses the rationale for adopting a narrative approach to analyzing accounts of migration and the decision to focus on non-discursive as well as discursive phenomena. It outlines how the research questions were translated into interview questions; the rationale behind the sample selection, interview procedure, recording and transcription notation; key changes in methodology; and the use of tapes, summaries, pen portraits and genograms.

The methodology used here is an adapted form of Gestalt-based (Rosenthal, 1993, 1998) and biographical interpretative narrative methodologies (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000). Rosenthal, like many other life story analysts, tend to begin their interviews by asking an open ended question to encourage participants to tell their life story. In contrast, Hollway and Jefferson focus their introductory question around a particular theme, for example crime. Like Hollway and Jefferson I ask people to talk about a particular issue, migration. However, because it requires them to reflect on events that took place over the course of their lives, it falls between these two approaches.

The choice of methodology was based on a desire to allow participants to present their experience as a unified whole, and prioritize issues they regard as important to themselves and to the question they were asked to address. Because this method enables the researcher to track how constructions change over the course of an interview, it is able to expose the multi-dimensional nature of experiences to research scrutiny. Consequently, it is well suited to this research that is primarily exploratory. I was also interested in this approach because, although it recognizes the 'dialogic' (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984) nature of interactions between the researcher and the researched, it treats the research participants as the actors and originators of meaning within the stories they present.

The chapter discusses the method of recruiting the sample (snowballing) and the rationale and consequences of the sample I chose to interview. Because the research is aimed at exploring how constructions of migration have been informed by racialized privilege, the sample was restricted to white South Africans and to migrations that took place well before apartheid was dismantled, prior to 1991. However, I decided to include a migrant who said that she was "born" Indian and "declared white South African[s]" as her account offers an extreme version of how whiteness was not only socially constructed but conveyed through bodies and the 'performances' they gave (Butler, 1990). It also discusses the rationale for the sample size (20); for focusing on families in which a migrant child or sibling is a parent; for interviewing both migrant (11) and non-

migrant (9) kin; for including some participants (10) who come from the same family; and for interviewing participants of both genders, 12 women and 8 men. These decisions were determined by the research questions I was seeking to address. However, they have meant that the research does not address several other aspects of migration, for example the experiences of people who migrated more recently and migrants who are not parents.

A number of sampling issues were not pre-set. Fairly early on in the research I noticed that I was recruiting migrants who had left in their early twenties and that about half of them identified themselves as Jewish. I decided to restrict the sample to families where migrants left at this point in the life course and to include up to ten people who were Jewish. The former created the possibility of analyzing how constructions of migration intersect with age-related changes and the latter of exploring how access to alternate sites of cultural or ethnic identification inform constructions of migration and positionings in relation to apartheid.

Changes in methodology are outlined. An important change was the decision to interview all participants twice rather than once, as previously planned. Holding a second interview created a longer time for establishing trust, increasing the likelihood of relatively silenced stories emerging. It also meant that where the research raised issues that had been particularly distressing, there was a space to reflect on what these encounters might have meant. The chapter also

discusses how I treat questions of reliability, validity, ethical concerns and my insider-outsider positionings as a researcher and white South African migrant.

Each of the four data analytic chapters focuses on a particular aspect of migration. Whilst chapters 4 and 7 are structured around one central theme, namely cross racialized relationships within the home and real and imagined encounters with the next generation, chapters 5 and 6 focus on particular migratory positions, migrancy and non-migrancy respectively. However, each chapter draws on social constructionist and psychoanalytic theories of loss and identification in analyzing what might contribute to diversities in narrative accounts. This means that, although they focus on what is said, they also pay attention to non-discursive markers like hesitancies and gaps in narrating. In addition, they prioritize the intersection between apartheid-based claims to identity and aspects of identity that are deemed to be more personal, and their interrelationship with constructions of family.

In seeking to derive clear themes from relatively unstructured interviews which lasted from one to two hours, some of the richness and textual detail of the narrations have been lost. However, my hope is that the verbatim narratives and interchanges I quote give a sense of the complexities, nuances and 'heteroglossia' (Bakhtin, 1981) apparent in what was said.



Chapter 4, **'Legacies of the relationship between white mother, black nanny and white child'**, draws on adults' recollections of relationships between white mothers, black nannies and white children as a way of interrogating how cross-racialized care informs portrayals of migration and racialization. It concentrates primarily on the accounts of migrants and non-migrant siblings. However, this is juxtaposed with an analysis of a non-migrant mother's portrayal of the relationship between her son and the domestic worker she had employed.

The chapter begins with a critique of the academic treatment of relationships with domestic workers, female migrations and what has come to be termed 'global care chains' (Hochschild, 2000; Parrenas, 2001, 2003). It reviews the internationally-based literature, as exemplified in the work of Anderson (2001, 2003), Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003), Lewis (2006) and Lutz (2008), before focusing on publications that relate to apartheid-based domestic employment, as in the publications of Cock (1989), Ginsberg (2006) and Pollock (1994). Since restrictions to residency meant that in order to work as domestic employees, black nannies were forced to live apart from their own families, the review contrasts the migration of white South Africans with that of black nannies.

The data analysis is organized around two themes, racialization and loss. It illustrates how for these white South Africans, triadic relationships within the home became one of the key sites in which white children learned to 'be' white or 'perform' (Butler, 1990) whiteness. This does not mean that all participants

adopted the same response in reflecting on memories of these relationships, as evident in narratives suggesting the development of a de-racialized identity despite the racism that dominated the wider context. There were also differences in the extent to which their relationships were infused with loss. Some positioned the nanny as a site of abandonment, others as a foil to feeling excluded by the mother, with one participant framing both mother and nanny as excluding.

The chapter explores what might account for this diversity by analyzing the situated nature of these racialized claims, for example how these claims intersect with other family and household dynamics. The relational concepts of 'renunciation' and 'repudiation' (Benjamin 1990, 1998) are used to interpret participants' adult reflections of how they came to terms with limits to identification with their nanny, one of the people with whom they had been most intimate as a child. Although gender and class are not treated as central issues, the analysis draws attention to the intersection between 'race', gender and class.

The chapter concludes by drawing on the work of Aktar (1995) in arguing that memories of separating from a family and paid carer appear to affect subsequent experiences of separation, including the separations incurred through migration. It proposes that what is particular about memories of apartheid-based cross-racialized care is that they relate to sites in which most white children learned to occupy a position as 'white'. It also suggests that the dismantling of apartheid means that memories of these relationships have become populated with events

that were downplayed before, including memories of how family relationships were implicated in maintaining the racialized status quo. As such, for white South Africans migration, and experiences of reflecting on the consequences of migration, have the potential to trigger memories of positions that appear shameful in the post-apartheid context.

Chapter 5, '**Migrants' narratives**', explores how eleven migrant participants, six women and five men, portray their responses to the disjunctions migration posed between their anticipated and lived experiences. It identifies three responses to migration, one prioritizing loss and downplaying gain, a second prioritizing gain and downplaying loss and a third presenting migration as having introduced levels of disruption that have been relatively easy to transcend.

Particular attention is paid to two linked themes, the consequences of having chosen or felt forced to leave family and the legacy of having lived under apartheid. As a result, the chapter focuses primarily on what it meant to leave South Africa rather than experiences of living in Britain. It also focuses more on relationships with the migrant's family of origin than on relationships with her or his family of procreation. However, greater attention is paid to relationships with the next generation in chapter 7.

One of the key theme centres on the intersection between migration and changes in the life course. This is reflected in discussions about the challenges

to caring for vulnerable parents and disruptions to individuation. It draws attention to differences in portrayal by showing how migration could be framed as interfering as well as assisting with anticipated relational change. Although some participants tend to prioritize one position, others tended to move between framing migration as disruptive as well as facilitative. In discussing what might account for diversities in portrayal, the chapter draws on the academic treatment of intergenerational and sibling relationships, changes in the life course and developments in theorizing and research diasporic and transnational experiences.

A second theme relates to the intersection between migratory and politicized claims. This includes analyzing situations in which constructions of the impact of migration on self and family seem to be imbued with attempts to make sense of positions that related to apartheid. This idea is developed further by exploring how access to alternate sites of identification, in this case Jewish histories of exile and othering, are used in claiming, affirming and contesting past and current understandings of apartheid-based positions.

As with all data analytic chapters, the analysis focuses on the content and process of narrating, on hedges and gaps in narrating that did not only appear to reflect what was not known but troubled subjectivities. Narratives prioritizing loss are discussed in relation to the concept that adult encounters of losses have the potential to trigger far earlier experiences of loss (Aktar, 1995; Mahler, Pine and

Bergman, 1975). Boss's (1991, 1999) concepts of 'ambiguous presence' and 'ambiguous absence' are used in considering the challenges and advantages of retaining those who live elsewhere as an ongoing presence in the lives of migrants. These concepts are linked with Miller and Stiver's (1991) notion of a 'relational paradox' in analyzing the family dynamics that unfold during reunions.

The chapter draws on Aktar's (1995) concept of a 'third individuation', a concept that has much in common with Bhabha's (1994, 1998) 'third space' and Brah's (1996) 'diasporic space' in discussing how events that are experienced as disruptive can create opportunities to construct a different understanding of self, family and other. It draws on Portelli's (1990, 2002) concept of 'uchronic imagining' in discussing what might contribute to the reworking of memory in situations in which history takes an unanticipated and unwelcome course.

Chapter 5 concludes by discussing the link between family dynamics, migration and responses to the dismantling of the apartheid regime. It draws attention to a greater tendency to conflate family and racialization when family dynamics are presented as particularly problematic. It also discussed how where relationships seem relatively uncontested, even if apartheid is used as a frame in describing others who live in South Africa, migrants tend to downplay apartheid-based discourses when reflecting on relationships with their own family. The chapter shows how change in relation to one modality of identity, for example the family, seems to open up the possibility of reworking 'troubled subject positions'

(Wetherell, 1998) that relate to another. However, it also illustrates how older constructions of family and/or socio-political positions can diminish the possibility of recognizing newer claims as authentic.

Chapter 6, '**Non-migrants' narratives**', analyzes how five non-migrant parents and four non-migrant siblings portray what it means to have remained in South Africa following the migration of an adult child or sibling. It begins by discussing the relative invisibility of non-migrants' experiences in theorizing migration. This is followed by a review of the growing but as yet limited literature devoted to the experiences of non-migrant kin, as in the work of Coles (2001), Miliadiades (2002) and Nguyen, Yeoh and Toyota (2006). The chapter outlines the main ways the non-migrant participants portray the consequences of migration. As with migrants, they involve framing migration as primarily disruptive, as facilitating changes that might otherwise may been impossible and as having caused relatively little disruption to anticipated identities and relationships. There follows a discussion of why relatively few non-migrants focus on the positive consequences that arise from the migration of a child or sibling, despite indications that it enabled some to develop a more comfortable positioning in relation to family and the society in which they live.

In discussing what might account for diversities in portrayal, particular attention is paid to exploring how family dynamics that pre-date migration and categorical differences in family positions contribute to migratory claims. As with migrants,

where family dynamics are positively construed and constructions of self suggest a strong identification with the migrant, reaching a different migratory decision appears to present a more significant challenge to the non-migrant's self identity. In contrast, where dynamics seem to have been more troubled, the differences posed by migration are more likely to be dismissed as indications of differences that pre-date the decision to leave. It also discusses how parents' support for their children's decision to migrate can inhibit expressions of loss and difficulty, particularly where children had been actively engaged in anti-apartheid activities.

The chapter considers the link between responses to being 'left behind' in relation to South African migrations and prior encounters with migration, particularly where those migrations had been traumatic. It considers how this prior engagement with migration can be used to dis-identify with the position of non-migrant, and/or marginalize a sense of belonging that is rooted in apartheid-based South Africa. These findings are discussed in terms of family and Jewish cultural histories of displacement.

Chapter 6 concludes by considering the differences and similarities between the issues prioritized by the non-migrant and migrant participants. A notable difference is that the migration of close kin seems to position non-migrants as subject to the consequences of someone else's decision. Even though some migrants frame apartheid as having 'forced' them to leave or ascribe primary responsibility for this decision to a partner, unlike their non-migrant kin, they

appear to have had some level of agency in this decision. A further difference is that migrants are physically removed from the current challenges of creating relationships that are less highly racialized or at least less organized on racist lines within South Africa, and from the dilemmas posed by attempting to construct a potential 'we', from what was previously 'them' and 'us', with people who were the victims of racialized oppression.

**Chapter 7, 'Real and imagined encounters with the next generation and death,** draws on interviews with migrant as well as non-migrant kin. It focuses on encounters with the next generation and death in discussing how these encounters have the potential to face migrants and their migrant kin with a reckoning with who they were, and have become.

Particular attention is paid to analyzing how individual participants reflect on the consequences of migration for themselves and others. However, because the sample includes participants from the same family, it also considers how the issues they present as individuals compare with the accounts of another member of their family. These comparisons are not regarded as a way of authenticating the data but of interrogating how differential positioning affects the identifications of members of the same family. In common with the other data analytic chapters, the analysis draws on developments in theorizing and researching migration, loss, identification and the intersection between personal and racialized aspects of identities. However, it also draws on literature devoted to changes in



intergenerational relationships over the life course and encounters with death. Although the relationship between identity and place is discussed elsewhere in the research, it assumes greater prominence in analyzing portrayals of death.

The chapter discusses findings that are likely to be relevant to other migratory contexts. One is that real and imagined encounters with the next generation have the potential to confront migrants with the extent to which relationships with their children and grandchildren are affected by living apart from other close family. It also discussed findings that are particular to migrations from apartheid-based South Africa. In this case, because the next generation's views are informed by post-apartheid discourses, their doxic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991) understandings about social agency are different to that of their migrant or non-migrant parents. This means that, in order to avoid being seen as shameful in their children's eyes, parents are likely to have to rework their understandings of their positions as social agents in the past.

A second area of analysis focused on constructions of real and anticipated encounters with death. The chapter outlines how death can become a point at which migrants and non-migrants are forced to reassess their past understanding of the impact of migration on family and the meanings of claiming a sense of belonging that is rooted in one or more places. It illustrates how these real and anticipated encounters with death also seem to face white South Africans with their shared and individual responses to apartheid. However, it also discusses

how the death of someone who represented the individual's relationship with the place in which they were the beneficiaries of apartheid may signify a release from having to deal with those aspects of the past.

The chapter ends by drawing on the work of Bhabha (1994) in framing these two encounters as having the potential to bring together aspects of identity and meaning systems in a different way, creating what he terms a 'third space'. It discusses how thoughts and attitudes that are considered unacceptable in the current context may seem to have changed to fit in with the new context, while continuing to operate in hidden ways. Consequently, it argues that rather than thinking of shifts in understanding in terms of an 'either-or', it is more useful to consider this process of reworking in terms of a movement between various positions.

Chapter 8, **'Conclusion: migration and the family, resiting identities across geographic space, political change and the life course'**, draws together the main findings generated from this research. It outlines how the social discourses surrounding apartheid based South Africa inform identity claims that underpin constructions of migration, racialization and the family. It discusses how the psychoanalytic concepts of repudiation and renunciation can be used to conceptualize the racialization of white children as well as responses to the losses and uncertainties which opened up as a result of migrations and the dismantling of apartheid (Benjamin, 1998). It also considers what might enable

individuals to take up aspects of self that have been marginalized, projected onto others and/or laid aside in the course of getting on with life.

The first part of the chapter focuses on issues that are likely to be applicable to researching other contexts of migration, namely that migration constructs and is constructed through external and internalized experiences of family. It argues for a need to move beyond globalized conceptualizations of 'the family' to studying how particular aspects of identity contribute to diversities in the portrayal and experience of family. In this context, issues that appear to have been particularly important include: whether the relationship under discussion was with a migrant or non-migrant and/or with a parent, child or sibling; relational dynamics that pre-date decisions to migrate; prior cultural and migratory claims and positions in the life course. The latter highlights the importance of considering how constructions of migration affect and are affected by the embodied ways in which desires and needs change as family members become older.

The second part of the chapter focuses on findings that are particular to migrations from apartheid-based South Africa. It argues that the dismantling of apartheid means that narratives that appear to reflect the dispossession posed by migration may represent the dispossession posed by the ending of the system that had granted all white South Africans racialized privilege. Apartheid appears to have infused experiences of family to such an extent that it is possible to use the family metonymically to represent the nation or apartheid regime.

Consequently, expressions of a desire for distance from certain family members may at some level reflect a desire for distance from the position of racially oppressive. It also means that even if migration is presented as a response to political events, political claims may mask other reasons migrants are ambivalent about identifying with their country of origin. The chapter also draws attention to the intersection between 'race' and gender, as exemplified in portrayals of relationships with black nannies and military conscription; to legacies of displacement and oppression, as evident in the accounts of participants who, like myself identify themselves as Jewish; and to memories and belongings that are rooted in place.

The third and final part of the conclusion outlines the implications for future study. It discusses the value of combining social constructionist and psychoanalytic interpretations and using an adapted form of narrative biographical interpretative method of analysis to exploring areas that have been under researched and theorized before and where the research addresses aspects of self and other that are uncomfortable to consider. The chapter also considers the implications for researching different forms of migration and responses to other situations in which life events introduce a disruption between anticipated and lived experience.

It continues by analyzing the constraints sampling decisions posed to interrogating apartheid-based migrations, and ideas for further research. There

follows a discussion of the challenges posed by the duality of my insider-outsider positions as migrant and researcher in seeking to explore an area which relates to aspects of self that are both deeply personal and highly politicized. I conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for psychotherapy with people whose lives have been affected by migration and other forms of disruption to their anticipated lives.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Mapping the theoretical domain**

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework of the research, and acts as an introduction to the later discussions of methodology, which include decisions on how to represent, analyze and interpret the data. The first part of the chapter outlines the rationale for combining social constructionist and psychoanalytic approaches to analyzing how white South Africans, like myself, construe the impact of migrations from apartheid-based South Africa on self, family and current societal positionings. The second reviews findings that have emerged from the two main frameworks used to conceptualize migration, diaspora and transnationality, and relates these findings to the treatment of South African migrations.

As this thesis is aimed at increasing understandings of how migration constructs experiences of self and family, the chapter reviews how these literatures theorize identity, memory and responses to disjunctions between anticipated and experienced life. Because South Africa, the country of migration, was not only highly politicized but governed by a highly racialized regime, this chapter does not only focus on ideas that have arisen from studying migratory experiences. It reviews ideas that have arisen from analyzing how understandings of self, family and other are informed by the discourses that dominate in the social settings in

which people have lived, including politicized and racialized discourses. Because the research treats the position of Jews as a particular site for interrogating how access to alternative sites of identity can be used and referenced, the chapter reviews the academic treatment of Jewish diasporic and transnational experiences as well.

The research aims to explore how migrations inform and are informed by experiences of family. As a result, the chapter offers a brief review of developments in theorizing and researching parent-child interactions and responses to change as people move across the life course as well as other situations in which people face unanticipated disruptions to their lives, such as illness (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target, 2004; Gorrell Barnes, 1989; Kleinman, 1998; Little, Paul, Jordens and Sayers, 2002; Mueller and Elder, 2003; Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Stern, 1985). In view of the wide spread practice of employing black women to care for white children during apartheid, it also reviews the academic treatment of the dynamics that unpin domestic employment. However, I discuss the literature devoted to changes in family relationships and identities and the legacies of domestic employment in greater detail in the chapters that draw on this literature in particular, Chapters 4 and 7.

## **2.1 Developments in theorizing and researching identity**

Although current constructions of identity are far from uniform, there is wide consensus that experience, narrating, memory and identity are inextricably linked. Barthes (1994), Bruner (1986, 1990, 2004) and Ricoeur (1984) were amongst the first to propose that narrating organizes, codifies and captures what is experienced, and that the spurious contingent perceptions that comprise experience are given a context, and are constrained and humanized through narrating. This stance takes for granted that experience occurs in the activity of production: it cannot stop and is in a state of forever becoming, or as Probyn suggests, it is “conjectural, located in the backwards and forwardness of the historical present” (1993, p21). Rather than refuting the possibility “that affect makes an imprint” (Kristeva, 1982, p49), most narrative approaches are predicated on the understanding that affect finds expression by being symbolized through language.

These ideas form the basis for viewing narrating as a way of bringing aspects of experience into conscious awareness. It includes analyzing what Georgakopolou (2006) terms ‘small stories’ is a way of learning about the dilemmas and troubled ‘subject positions’ narrators negotiate in telling their stories (Wetherell, 1998). It offers a way of understanding how narrators relate their personal experience to



what Bruner (1990) terms 'canonical narratives' and to current views on what is acceptable to say or do within the particular cultures.

Narrative approaches to identity are grounded in the view that memory provides the phenomenological basis for identity, informing the ideas we hold of who we are and the circumstances that have made us so. This means that, where identity is in question, memories are likely to be in question as well (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1999; Lambek and Antze, 1996).

This approach to identity owes much to the work of Foucault (1980). He proposed that although physical objects and actions exist, they only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse. Discursive ideas contributed to a move away from unitary notions of identity and memory, towards anti-essentialist critiques of ethnic, racial and national conceptions, framing identities and memory as mobile, multiple and situated (Hall, 1998). The move has been accompanied by increased interest in subjectivity and application of psychoanalytic theories to wider social processes, as exemplified in developments in psychoanalytically informed feminist and cultural theories (Benjamin, 1998; Butler, 1990; Chodorow, 1978).

Discursive concepts have been instrumental to the development of what have been termed 'intersectional' approaches to identity (Brah, 1996; Crenshaw, 1989). Although there is considerable debate about how intersectionality should

be conceptualized and analyzed, it is predicated on the assumption that to make sense of identity claims, one needs to consider how certain identities operate in relation to other modalities of identity. Some, like Butler (1990), argue that an intersectional approach could lead to a limitless process of signification, underplaying the power differentials denoted by these significations and how certain knowledge claims provide a more adequate account of the world than others. McCall (2005) addresses these concerns by suggesting three possibilities: predetermine where the list of categories will end; highlight the artificiality of social categories, what she terms an 'anti-categorical' approach; and affirm particular social categories while remaining free to bring them into question.

The latter option seems to be best suited to this area of study. It allows racialized categories to be held as a constant, regardless of whether they are mentioned or not. This enables researchers to interrogate how positions which are 'unmarked', such as whitenesses, and 'marked', such as blacknesses, relate to other modalities for example classed, gendered, ethnicized and family-based positions (Phoenix and Pattiyama, 2006). Consequently, it offers a framework for considering how racialized histories might contribute to validating and contesting the more private struggles white families face.

As the research relates to areas of experience that are likely to place participants in 'troubled subject positions' (Wetherell, 1998), such as the consequences of

leaving or being left by close family and racialization, particular attention is paid to analyzing the unsaid. Consequently, the chapter reviews current conceptualizations of how geographic locations are imagined and referenced (Massey, 1994; Olwig, 1997; Uguris, 2000) and how life stories, experiences and feelings are conveyed through bodies and the 'performances' they give (Butler, 1990; Probyn, 1993). However, because psychoanalytic theories place particular emphasis on interpreting the unsaid, and since, as Phoenix (2004) suggests, they are 'sedimented' into what is currently regarded as common sense, particular attention is paid to psychoanalytic interpretations of the processes of othering and identification.

### **2.1.1 Social constructionist theorizations of identity**

Although no single definition fits all social constructionist approaches, the views that unite them are that meanings and social realities are negotiated and that identity, knowledge and the emotions that are available to be felt arise from social processes and interactions within particular socially structured contexts. Identity is seen to be relational and bound up with others' identities and predicated on the understanding that social realities shift according to the history of relationships (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, 2001; Gergen and Gergen, 2006). As such, they are well suited to interrogating how individuals make sense of experiences that took

place when they were not only younger, but when the ideology that dominated the country in which they had lived was very different.

Foucault's (1980) ideas have been instrumental to this view. They shifted the study of language from semantics to the meanings and power relationships embedded in the practice or production of language. In so doing, they challenged the distinction between what is said, namely language, and the practice of language, leading to increased interest in how language and narrating shapes both thought and memory.

The shift contributed to an altered understanding of the part language plays in processes of identification. It led to the recognition that, even though we are unlikely to be aware of this, the language we use is informed by the cumulative imagination of others. Bakhtin (1981) uses the term 'dialogic self' to signify that conversations with others become internalized as private mental operations. This means that subjective life is far from solitary and that self reflections include internalized contestations and jostling between various taken-for-granted positionings. He introduced a concept he calls 'heteroglossia' to illustrate how one utterance may be positioned in relation to different and contradictory meaning systems, regardless of whether this process is conscious or not. Jenkins (2001) argues that the ability to imagine alternatives in the presence of a clearly defined stimulus situation enables people who are positioned as inferior

by dominant discourses to construct an inferior position as only one of several ways of viewing their lives.

Discursive ideas have had a significant impact on understandings of agency and representation. Viewing discourse, rather than the subject who speaks, as producing knowledge, displaced the subject from its privileged position in relation to knowledge. It focused attention on the discourses that construct the identity or 'subject positions' from which they make and have effects (Davies and Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998). This led to calls to think more in terms of identification rather than identity, and to viewing identity as "always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p201).

This shift in theorizing has been accompanied by a move away from thinking in terms of 'race' to racialization, thus giving 'race' and racism a formative rather than expressive place in political, social and psychic life, as for example in the work of Bulmer and Solomos (2004), Frankenberg (1993, 1997) and Lewis and Phoenix (2004). It meant that instead of positioning the individual as racist, academic attention began to focus more on the discourses and practices that maintain racist relationships. This shift is exemplified in Billig's (1991) illustration of how normalizing discourses can be used to construct a liberal portrayal of the self while positioning a person who is portrayed as Other as inferior, in statements like 'I am not prejudiced but...'. His analysis of prejudice is predicated

on the understanding that ideologies present a way of resolving contradictions between multiple positionings by disguising the 'real' relations of power as benign, and assuring the preservation of power structures.

These conceptualizations of racialization position individuals as active in constructing and reconstructing cultural and racialized identities. They have been instrumental to deconstructing the imprints of colonial history, reconstructing racial politics and constructing racialized categories as contradictory, fragmented, shifting and ambivalent (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Bhavnani and Phoenix, 1994; Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1990; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998; Lewis, 2000). These views have led to increased recognition that terms like white, black and coloured do not represent absolutes, but are culturally constructed and serve to maintain racialized privilege, oppression and prejudice (Fine, Weis, Powell and Wong, 1997; Phoenix, 2004). They have also led to calls to position whiteness as central to debates on racialization and to differentiate between whiteness as part of a racialized ideology and the various subject positions open to and adopted by white people (Giroux, 1997; Lewis and Phoenix, 2004; Phoenix, 2002). In Britain, this view is exemplified in such proclamations as "homogeneity in the so-called majority is a myth" (Parekh Report, 2000, p105). Within the field of migratory research, it is reflected in a growing commitment to unpack the ways in which migration, race, gender and ethnicity "circulate, articulate, are embedded and produced in representations of collective identity and local particularity" (Fortier, 2002, p4).

However, like all signifying practices, identity construction is subject to the play of 'différance' (Derrida, 1981): it requires discursive work to bind and mark boundaries (Hall, 1998). Derrida's concept of 'différance' captures the sense that difference and similarity do not only exist but matter. It combines the idea of difference with deferment as it draws on the French 'différer', a word which translates as both defer and difference. Although pronounced as difference, its unusual spelling (in English) signifies that the written word is not completely heard, emphasizing that words never fully summon up what they mean and can only be explained by using other words. Hall draws on the work of Derrida in proposing that, although identification is usually associated with recognition of a shared origin or characteristics with a person or group, it is not only lodged in contingency but bound up with lack. Hall frames identification as bound up with 'othering'. He argues that: "[I]t is only through the relationship to the Other, the relationship to what is not [...] that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' can be constructed" (p4-5).

Cultural theorists have long drawn on the concept of the Other in theorizing identity claims, for example in Said's (1978) proposal that 'the Orient' is a concept which has been constructed by European culture as a way of positioning European culture as superior to people and cultures that are non-European. Minh-ha (1989) proposes similarly that othering represents a process of identifying oneself with a chain of signifiers deemed desirable while identifying

those one subjugates with an oppositional chain. Both authors suggest that an important consequence of being defined as Other is that one is the object of someone else's fantasies rather than a subject with voice and agency.

The concept of othering is integral to analyzing white South Africans' constructions of migration. It offers a frame for considering how the participants and I deal with the dualities of our insider and outsider positions, of here and there, of staying put and dispersal, of abandoning and being abandoned, of the past and present, of whiteness and blackness, and of identifying and dis-identifying with positionings as racially privileged. It is integral to understanding how migrant and non-migrant kin have made sense of the consequences of reaching similar and different migratory choices. It is also integral to interpreting how we have dealt with our individual and collective histories of racialized oppression following the collapse of the political system that had granted all white South Africans privileged racialized status.

A number of other concepts, 'interpellation' (Althusser, 1971), 'habitus' and 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991) and social positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1989) focus more particularly on how individual experiences are informed by the contexts in which people live. Althusser proposed that individuals are recruited into identity positions by being 'interpellated' socially, symbolically, psychologically and emotionally. This process entails "recognizing our constitution as 'ourselves' within the fragments we process as knowledge";



'hailing' and 'being 'hailed' within the discourses that produce us and the narratives we spin; directing our socially, culturally, psychically, and spiritually marked focus of attention upon that which we appropriate as 'data' or 'evidence'" (Brah 1999, p5-6). Althusser's work has been criticized for its structural formalism and insufficient attention to agency and gender. Nonetheless, it has been instrumental to researching how the social constitutes itself in, and through, the symbolic practices of law, politics and the media. Interpellation tends to be used to represent the way in which individuals are 'hailed' into particular cultural and politicized positions. However, it seems equally well suited to considering the recruitment into particular family positionings.

Bourdieu's (1984, 1991) concepts of habitus and doxa draw more particularly on phenomenology. 'Habitus' denotes the way in which socially constituted perceptions render the world meaningful and inform what comes to be seen as common sense. 'Doxa' denotes the set of ideas that contribute to what we take as 'givens' about the everyday. Together they are used to signify that individuals are imbued with a particular sense of the world, people and objects through life in culturally and historically specific spaces. Bourdieu's concepts have been widely applied to researching class-based positions. Notable examples include Charlesworth's (2000) analysis of how, in contexts of class-based social mobility, instead of intergenerational differences relating purely to differences in personality, they may reflect differences in exposure to particular habitus and

doxa and Skeggs' (2003) analysis of how class, intimacy and ethics are produced through political and popular rhetoric.

As with Althusser's interpellation, critics argue that Bourdieu's work underplays agency, constructing an idealized oversimplification of the past status quo. Despite these criticisms, his ideas are well suited to this research as they allow for an understanding of self that extends beyond language and emphasize the importance of interrogating "that which we think from rather than what we think about" (Charlesworth, 2000, p30). Although Bourdieu's work is based on phenomenology, it accords with the importance life course theorists attach to membership of a cohort who belong to the same generation, share the same year of birth and a common location in relation to particular socio-historical processes (Elder, 1994; Mueller and Elder, 2003). Life course approaches have much in common with family life cycle theories (Carter and McGoldrick, 1999; Pratt and Fiese, 2004). However, the latter places greater emphasis on intergenerational processes and, until recently, viewed age related changes as unfolding in a relatively universalizing manner. Because I am interested in how intergenerational processes inform the ideas that are taken as givens about the world, the research draws on the concepts of habitus and doxa as well as both life course and life cycle approaches.

Although both Althusser and Bourdieu refer to the significance of language, language is more central to discursive theories of identity, as exemplified in

theorizing subject positioning. Social positioning is predicated on the understanding that, instead of 'having' an a priori identity, identity is taken up, disputed and constructed through language (Davies and Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998). Social positioning can be extremely fleeting as it is informed by turns in conversation. The concept frames individuals as authors as well as products of their social worlds. It implies that they are not only agentic in communicating and creating social meanings through interactions with others but subject to the influence of the discourses that dominate the contexts in which they live. This means that identities are not only constituted by the accounts we offer ourselves but through the accounts others give of us.

The concept that identities represent positions that are taken up through language is reflected in Taylor and Wetherell's (1995) analysis of how associating with, or disassociating from, particular aspects of collective identities are used to claim particular national identities. Focusing more particularly on family identity claims, Mauthner (1993) draws on social positioning in analyzing how siblings negotiate their similarities and difference. She shows how the identity positions as caring and/or powerful are claimed through the social meanings that are embedded in the language they use to construct their interactions and relationships.

Social constructionist ideas are extremely pertinent to this research. They offer a way of theorizing how, although there may be differences in racialized, ethnic, national and family characteristics, differences only assume meaning once individuals identify with the position that discourse constructs. In view of the highly politicized and racialized nature of South Africa, what is particularly useful is that they offer a way of theorizing how identities, meanings and preferences are constructed in and through language in relation to particular socio-historical discourses, in this context, the various discourses associated with apartheid.

However, a number of concerns have been raised about discursive and social constructionist ideas. These include concerns that a preoccupation with discourse has led to marginalizing not only agency but economic, structural and material factors, glossing over questions of determinism and failing to take account of motivation. It has also been argued that they frame the subject of narrating as having a life that consists of endless retellings and performances, is constantly in flux, and the product of intersecting systems of power and knowledge (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Mahoney and Yngvesson, 1992). Ginsburg (1989) addresses the latter concerns by arguing that it is possible to avoid an extreme version of fluidity by connecting narrative to life history and political economy. Hall (1998) responds to these concerns by arguing that, instead of viewing the material as irrelevant and underplaying agency, discursive and social constructionist approaches highlight the real effects of discourse on the lives of individual agents.

A concern that is particularly relevant when investigating issues that are troubling to articulate is that prioritizing language can lead to ignoring modes of cultural transmission that operate through the unsaid, through innuendo, censorship and experiences that lie beyond conscious memory (Fuchs, 2002). In order to ensure that the research takes account of such transmissions, the analysis combines the ideas that have emerged from social constructionist theorizing with other frameworks that prioritize the unsaid. It draws on ideas that have emerged from analyzing how geographic locations are imagined, used and referenced and how they relate to particular social processes, relationships and global and local histories (Olwig, 1997; Massey, 1994; Uguris, 2000). In view of the highly racialized context of apartheid-based South Africa, it also draws on analysis of how bodies are implicated in the racialization and gendering of identities (Butler, 1990; Jarrett-Macauley, 1995; Probyn, 1993). As illustrated in the following section, because psychoanalytic approaches have long been associated with theorizing the unsaid, particular attention is paid to psychoanalytic interpretations of identity and the relationship between identification and othering.

However, as mentioned earlier, this is also informed by a clinically based interest in how interpersonal processes are informed by the intrapsychic as well. Much of my clinical work as a systemic psychotherapist, has been informed by the idea that individual experience informs and is informed by relationships with others. To understand the development of systemic theory, it is important to recognize it

emerged in the context of a struggle to generate a theory and practices that could meet the demands of therapy with families. Informed by cybernetic theories, the findings of research based on an analysis of communication patterns and later on social constructionist ideas, it offered a view of problems and 'pathology' as primarily interactional and emphasized the centrality of relationships and communication to the development of identity and experience (Bateson, 1972; von Bertalanffy, 1968).

There are important differences with psychoanalytic work. In analytic work, the focus for change is the client's inner world and her or his experience of this. The aim is to create some difference to this experience, a difference that may in turn influence of their current behaviour and relationships. In contrast, systemic therapy is concerned with facilitating change in the clients' significant relationships and their experience of themselves in relation to others. Coming to know oneself as differently may be part of this process, but ways of knowing are not privileged over other routes to change. Instead, therapy aims to create a space that allows something different to occur in the clients' relationships with others.

As with all theoretical and therapeutic frameworks, systemic theories have evolved over time. Concerns emerged about the pragmatic and relatively mechanistic nature of early theorizing, about viewing all problems as interpersonal and the inattention to inequalities of power within families and their

relationship with wider cultural patterns. These concerns led to the development of what has been called second order approaches which attend more to how families and therapists actively co-construct meanings (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman and Papp, 1987; Campbell and Draper, 1985). Informed by social constructionist, feminist theories and narrative theories, there have been moves to embrace the idea that the system extends beyond that of a particular family or organization. Consequently, current trainings place more emphasis on positionings within the wider cultural setting and addressing the implications of the cultural and power based discourses that dominate the contexts in which individuals and their families live (Altschuler, Graham, Inglebright, Sawyer, Smith, Wieselberg and Woodcock, 2001).

As suggested by the concepts of interpellation, doxa, habitus and social positioning, systemic theories are predicated on the understanding that to make sense of personal experience, one need to consider the context in which it takes place. This notion of context includes the individual's relationships with significant others as well as events and discourses that circulate in the wider context in which they live. Linked with this is the view that any major event affecting an individual within a system will have some implications for the relationship with, and relationships between, all other members of that system. Consequently, understanding the patterns that connect people and experience offer a way of making sense of how people respond to and are affected by family members as

well as broader systems of meaning (Gorrell-Barnes 1998; Minuchin, 1974; White and Epston, 1990).

However, despite my training and clinical experience of the value of a systemic approach, I have become increasingly concerned about its relative neglect of how interactions in the here and now are affected by events in the past and of understandings of self and other that lie beyond what is language. This led to exploring what psychoanalytic ideas might offer clinical practice. This interest increased during the course of the research as I became more aware of the need to consider how constructions of migration are informed by experiences that take place prior to the development of language and in this case, the embodied nature of the relationship between the white child and her or his white mother and black nanny. Consequently, the research combines social constructionist ideas with the psychoanalytic notion of a defended subject and the idea that subjects invest in the discourses they draw on for protection from anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

### **2.1.2 Psychoanalytic theorizations of identity**

In discussing psychoanalytic ideas, I shall focus in particular on interpretations of how othering contributes to identities. Most psychoanalytic interpretations of identity have been influenced by Freud's (1991, original 1953) formulation of the role of the unconscious in developing personality, and the influence of parent-



child relationships on subsequent well-being and relationships. His theories led to increased awareness that individuals are not necessarily rational and that certain memories, impulses and wishes are resisted and remain unconscious, either because they are experienced as bad or forbidden, or do not make sense. Although these memories, impulses and wishes might be 'repressed', they are understood to remain alive and strive for expression, informing subsequent experience and expressions of self and other.

Klein's (1975) interpretations of identification have had a significant influence on developments in theorizing 'the other'. Her concept of identification is based on relating to an object in terms of perceived similarities with the ego (Hinshelwood, 1989). Focusing primarily on the infant's interactions with a primary caregiver, more usually a mother, she proposed that, in the early months, the infant's experiences tend to be characterized by feelings of satisfaction or frustration. When her/his needs are met, the caregiver is experienced as loving, but when they are not, for example when hungry, the infant feels frustration. The infant responds to the threat posed by the intensity of her or his destructive emotions by 'projecting' them towards the mother's breast, reducing the conflict to the psyche, the threat from within. At this point, the infant is unaware that the figure she/he loves and hates is the same. Paradoxically, projection leads to paranoid sensations, as it increases the sense of threat from the outside. Later the infant realizes that the recipient of loving and hateful feelings is the same, introducing

anxiety of a more depressive nature, such as concern for the state of the object and a drive to repair perceived damage.

Where the sense of destructiveness is overshadowed by love, namely where the infant experiences the outside world as benevolent, it is possible to integrate envious and positive feelings. However, where circumstances impede the development of more positive experiences, paranoid ways of thinking increase, leading to 'splitting' and projecting what is experienced as negative onto others. She also proposes that there is an inextricable link between denial of the denigrated other and the desire for, or to be, that other. Klein's work assumes that adults' representations are informed or structured through affects that were present during infancy, and that individuals employ similar mechanisms for managing anxieties in later life. It implies that subsequent experiences of separation are informed by conscious and unconscious memories of the losses incurred through earlier parent-child separations, a concept I return to in the second part of the chapter.

Although Klein offered valuable insight into the processes of othering, as with most earlier psychoanalytic theorists, she said little about the content on which representations of the Other are based. This omission meant that earlier formulations of the othering framed racism as a product of internalized individual dynamics and a reflection of a human instinct to seek confirmation from an in-group by denigrating, opposing and threatening the out-group. Consequently, it

omitted to consider how intrapsychic processes are informed by the values and ideologies of the culture and societies in which people live (Dalal, 2002).

Increased interest in discursive ideas has contributed to the development of a 'psycho-social' approach to research. The approach embraces the idea that people are constructed as Other along dimensions of gender, race, class and sexuality and/or through cultural processes that involve language as an instrument of power (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002; Gunaratnam, and Lewis, 2001; Hollway, 2006). It also reflects awareness that the otherness that is embodied in a person or people seen to be Other represents a primary source of subjectivity (Butler, 2003; 2008). In his analysis of how anti-Semitism impacted on the uptake of psychoanalytic ideas, Frosh (2005) argues that adopting a psycho-social approach means that rather than viewing the contradictions in society "as accompaniments of, or accidental parallels to, the contradictions of the unconscious: they actively *produce* them, through all the micro- and macrosocial practices (parental interactions and anxieties; socialization practices; familial beliefs; gendered and 'racialised' institutional practices, etc) out of which each individual is made" (p196). These shifts in understanding have been enhanced by developments in theorizing gendered identifications (Benjamin, 1984, 1998; Chodorow, 1978; Goldner, 1985; Hollway, 1984).

Benjamin's (1990, 1998) interpretation of the gendering of identities offers a particularly valuable frame for theorizing the othering that unpins the ways in

which people make sense of the consequences of migratory decisions and of how they were positioned in relation to apartheid. Like Klein (1975), Benjamin's formulations are predicated on the understanding that early infantile experiences are oriented towards protecting the self from anxiety. She proposes that in situations in which one is faced with the "loss and uncontrollability that otherness necessarily brings" (1989, p79), people tend to protect themselves through 'repudiation' or renunciation'. She illustrates these processes by outlining how for young boys, repudiation involves a split between what is masculine and feminine and a rejection of the feminine: it involves pushing what is feared or hated out of one's space onto 'the other'. In contrast, renunciation involves holding on to good and bad parts of both masculine and feminine in the self and other. This permits a more enduring identification with the mother. Rather than suggesting that individuals adopt one approach at all times, they are understood to oscillate between the two.

Although the concepts of repudiation and renunciation have their roots in Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Benjamin relates internalized experiences of identification to the gendered discourses that circulate within the context in which individuals live. She draws on the findings of developmentally-based research, findings which illustrate how the infant acts as a meaning-maker in a world that is constituted through intersubjective experience as well as language (Stern, 1985). These ideas are particularly relevant to the current research: by drawing attention to the affective texture of caregiver-infant

interactions and relationships that develop from this, they highlight the limitations of rationally based arguments.

Benjamin's approach does not address the other structural inequalities that circulate in the contexts in which interpersonal interactions take place (Mahoney and Yngvesson, 1992). The anxieties engendered during early childhood development are likely to be very different to the anxieties posed by the racialization of identities or those that are triggered through adult migrations. Nonetheless, it offers a framework for theorizing how participants make sense of the losses and uncertainties incurred through cross-racialization within the home, the dismantling of apartheid and migration.

In contrasting social constructionist and psychoanalytic approaches to identity, my intention has not been to suggest that one is more suited to the current research than another. Rather, it has been to illustrate the need to adopt a framework that views the subject as making meanings in and through discourse as well as internal and external experiences of relationships. This requires a methodology that allows for an analysis of the ways in which psychoanalytic processes relate to wider social discourses, particularly to the discourses of racialization, migration and the family.

Both approaches adopt a constructionist stance to reality. Walker and Unterhalter argue that "in a society founded on the lies of the privileged, the truth assumes a

particular importance” (2004, p292). Concerns about questions of relativity have led to the development of what has been called a critical realist approach, an approach that conceive of a complex but structured and ordered world in which things are going on even if they cannot be perceived, measured or discussed (Lopez and Potter, 2001). With this in mind, the next section considers the relationship between truth and reconstructions of memory.

### **2.1.3 Memory and challenges to prior constructions of self and other**

Conceptualizations of memory vary considerably. Until about thirty years ago, memory tended to be seen as objective and removed from considerations of self, the agent or community on whom the memory centres. Remembering was portrayed as a process of retrieving items from some form of archive. Various cognitive theorists and researchers continue to study memory in terms of the storing and retrieving of stimulus information. However, this has been accompanied by increased interest in studying memory as a socially constructed phenomenon as distinct from its cognitive and neuro-psychological aspects (Bal, 1999; Samuel and Thompson, 1990).

This view emerges from the understanding that experience, narration, memory and identity are inextricably linked and that the meanings and emotions associated with past events change as we encounter different experiences, ideas and social networks. Rather than regarding recollections of the past as static, the

stories we tell about our past and present are seen to open up different identities from which to imagine a future in response to questions about agency, who we are and who we want to become (Lambek and Antze, 1996; Samuel, and Thompson, 1990). This implies that memories can be interpreted as reflections of how individuals negotiate discontinuities between the past, present and imagined future. This idea is exemplified in the work of Little, Paul, Jordens and Sayers (2002) which illustrates how some people respond to a diagnosis of cancer by prioritizing memories of the past that fit in with how they wish to be seen in the present.

Although discursive and psychoanalytic approaches treat memory as constructed, rather than searching for hidden inner processes, discursively-based studies are concerned with the language games or 'genre of utterances' (Bakhtin, 1981) used in claims of remembering and forgetting, and on what these claims accomplish socially (Edwards and Middleton, 1986; Edwards and Potter, 1992). This often extends to analyzing the relationships of power, privilege and authority that inform the encoding and representation of experience (Billig, 1991, 1999). Psychoanalytic theories place greater emphasis on life history, interferences in memory and on experiences that lie outside of, or are somehow prior to, conscious memory. They view memory as informed by an internalized need to repress or deny what is unacceptable or cannot be faced, and as 'screens' that have already been impressed by the fantasies and distortions of previous remembering (Freud, 1991, original, 1953). Because I am interested in

making sense of how memories of migration and apartheid are informed by events in the external world as well as internalized dynamics, the research treats memory as a 'double phenomenon' (Squire, 2002) and draws on discursive as well as psychoanalytic approaches to memory.

The approach to memory is also informed by Halbwachs' (1950, translated 1992) concept of a 'collective memory'. Three aspects of his work are particularly pertinent to this research. The first is that the memories that are capable of being retained are a function of socially constituted forms, narratives and relations. The second is that rather than viewing individual memory as an isolated repository of personal experience, it is a function of social memory. The third is that social memory is reciprocally linked to social forgetting. Halbwach's concept of the collective memory is predicated on the understanding that the maintenance and repression of certain memories may be unconscious. Consequently, although he does not refer to psychoanalysis, it lends itself to psychoanalytic interpretations (Crewe, 1999).

A wide body of literature attests to the idea that memory takes many forms and serves multiple purposes (Bal, Crew and Spitzer, 1999; Felman and Laub, 1992; Lambek and Anzite, 1996). Some memories have been described as habitual because they remain relatively unnoticed unless brought to the surface through other circumstances. In contrast, the emotions surrounding 'narrative memories' render them more memorable, and affect whether particular memories remain at



the foreground or background of present experience. A third term, 'traumatic memory', denotes 'failures of memory': it signifies encounters that are difficult to symbolize and incorporate into narrative memory, including encounters of abuse and racial discrimination (Bal, Crewe, Spitzer, 1999).

One of the ways psychoanalysts interpret 'failures' of memory is in terms of 'repression', a form of ellipsis in which important aspects of the narrative are omitted. Another is through splitting, whereby certain aspects of the experience are projected onto a different context and/or a different person, enabling the individual to disassociate from the emotional impact that would otherwise be aroused by remembering. As reflected in the responses of individuals who have encountered abuse and genocide, the memories of such traumatic encounters may persist even if they appear to have been forgotten and have not been symbolized through language (Felman and Laub, 1992; George, 1996; Young, 1996). Although there is some overlap between repression and denial, the term denial usually denotes a more conscious refusal to know. However, as with traumatic memory, this is a relative misnomer. One cannot deny what one has never known and the idea of 'never known' conflates symbolized and embodied memory (Cohen, 2001).

In discussing such 'failures' or refusals to remember, my intention is not to suggest that migration from South Africa was necessarily traumatic or involved significant levels of denial. However, it is to illustrate that what is known at one

level might be uncomfortable to translate into narrative memory and that the boundaries between 'ordinary' and more 'traumatic' memories may be blurred.

Hirsch (1999) introduces a different understanding. He coined the term 'postmemories' to characterize the experience of people who grow up dominated by narratives that precede their birth, whose experiences are shaped by the previous generation's encounter with traumatic events that they cannot understand. This concept offers a way of theorizing how subsequent generations are affected by representational forms of events that took place at a different time, and involved people with whom they have no known relationship, as for example in the case of the children of victims and perpetrators of the Nazi regime (Kaslow, 1995; Rosenthal, 1998; Rustin, 1988; Sichrovsky 1988). Stanley (2006) draws on postmemory to interpret how the treatment of Afrikaans-speakers prior to 1948 contributed to the development of apartheid and affected responses to its subsequent dismantling. The idea that experiences of family might be troubling contests the widely held view that looking to family provides a way of retaining cultural memories and traditions and constructing a sense of place in the context of geographic dislocation (Appaduria, 2003). Chamberlain and Leydesdorff's (2004) refer to this in arguing that looking to family can prove problematic when aspects of family are implicated in the decision to leave.

Although postmemory is used to account for the transmission of traumatic memories, it is reminiscent of Byng-Hall's (1985, 1995) 'family scripts' and

Wang's (2004) 'memory talk', concepts that are predicated on the idea that family values, beliefs and expectations are transmitted across generations through the stories parents tell and omit to tell. As with Hirsch, neither author views the internalization of past stories or 'memories' as prescriptive of subsequent behaviour and attitude. Wang sees memory talk as having the potential to recruit children into idealized or denigrated constructions of their parents' pasts. In contrast, Byng-Hall combines systemic and psychoanalytic ideas in framing family scripts as the internal maps subsequent generations draw on in attempting to repeat or correct past ways of relating. With the exception of the work of Falicov (2005), these ideas have not been used in theorizing migration. However, they offer a framework for considering how the cultural attachments of immigrant children are mediated through the stories of their parents.

Portelli (1990, 2002) uses the notion of uchronic imaginings in discussing responses to political events that challenge dearly held memories of self and other. He proposes that one way of dealing with situations in which history takes a less-preferred course is to prioritize memories that reflect an alternative present, "a sort of parallel universe in which the different unfolding of history had not taken place" (Portelli, 2002, p100). Although he relates uchronia to political events, it has overlaps with nostalgia. There is considerable debate about what nostalgia means. However, like uchronia, it signifies a relationship to the past that may or may not be conscious. It allows individuals to hold on to what might have been, and represents a form of remembering that is regressive,

romanticizing and a longing for what never was. Constructing an unbroken narrative in these ways may help in dealing with loss and uncertainty as it ameliorates the dissonance posed by unanticipated change. However, they can have problematic consequences: they can lead to constructing narratives that are so restricted that they limit the individual's flexibility in responding to altered circumstances or to prioritizing memories that so disparate that they interfere with the ability to construct a sufficiently coherent narrative.

Bhabha (1994, 1998) proposes that situations of uncertainty, contradiction and silences need not be problematic. They have the potential to bring aspects of self and meaning systems together in a different way, allowing an altered engagement with various aspects of self and other and creating what he calls a 'third space'. The term third space is suggestive of the potentially subversive character of diaspora. It was formulated to account for situations of cultural transitions and refutes the view that cultural change occurs in one direction only. However, it offers a useful vehicle for theorizing transitions in the life course, including the shifts in understanding that occur when faced with real and anticipated encounters with the next generation and death (Kubler Ross, 1983, 1997; Mancini and Bliesner, 1989; Mueller and Elder, 2003; Rossi and Rossi, 1990; Umberson, 2003; Umberson and Chen, 1994).

Bhabha (1998) draws on this concept of a third space in arguing that historical reconstruction is valuable because it provides an opportunity to reinscribe,

reactivate, relocate and resignify the past, enabling individuals to use these altered understandings in working through the present. The idea that an altered engagement with the past might be instrumental to shifts in understanding underlies the importance most psychotherapeutic approaches ascribe to narrating, as evident in the systemically based narrative approach that informs much of my own clinical work (Weingarten, 1994; White and Epston, 1990). It is also integral to the hope that delving into South Africa's past through initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) might bring people into dialogue with Other identities, lifting "the veil of secrecy and state-induced blindness" (TRC, 1999, p20).

Narrative theorists and therapists are divided on the issue of narrative coherence. Some view coherence as integral to psychological well being, thus favouring a stabilizing and anchoring sense of self (Salvatore, Conti, Fiore, Carcione, Diaggio and Semarari, 2006). Others argue that, as individuals are embedded in complex social relationships multiple narratives are required (Gergen and Gergen, 2006). However, remembering the past in a way that retains multiple versions, turbulence and fragmentation is always challenging because of the need to take account of the complex interplay between cultural discourses of wholeness, coherence and change (Hall, 1998; Friedlander, 1992). It is likely to be even more challenging when private constructions of self, family and those deemed to be Other intersect with public contradictions between the desire for a single, uncontested truth and the desire for healing, as evident in

state-controlled processes of reconciliation in Chile (Frazier, 2007) and South Africa (Ndebele, 1999; Nuttal and Coetzee, 1998; Rose, 2003).

Giddens uses the concepts of shame in discussing memories that challenge preferred views of self. He defines shame as “anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative by means of which the individual sustains a coherent biography” (1991, p65). Kaufman (1992) and Jones (2004) propose similarly that shame occurs at the boundary between the personal and the private: it arises from knowing or fearing one has been seen, from the fear of rejection and being exposed as shameful. One of the issues that inhibit acknowledging one’s position in relation to events that cause shame is that the experience of shame can itself be shaming. Thandeka (2000) views shame as a key psychic dimension in the construction and negotiation of whiteness. She argues that whiteness is a learned practice and psychic state which is centred on defeat and penalty rather than privilege alone. Giroux (1997) highlights some of the damaging consequences of shame as well. He argues that the risk of thinking in terms of ‘whiteness’ rather than ‘whitenesses’, and ‘racism’ rather than ‘racisms’, is that it restricts whiteness to a space between guilt and denial, paralyzing those who might seek alternative subject positions.

These ideas raise questions about how to conceptualize truth in relation to highly politicized and/or shaming events. Spence (1982) differentiates between historical, psychological and narrative truth in discussing the interface between

self-accounts, historical accounts and what is constructed as 'reality'. He uses historical truth to denote what is commonly regarded as objective reality, psychological truth to denote perceptions of an event or what is commonly seen as experienced reality, and narrative truth to denote the interactional processes of narrating at a particular biographical and historical moment and a certain place. This differentiation is particularly useful as it takes account of the chosen content as well as the content that is silenced (Ben Ezer, 2002).

## **2.2 Developments in researching and theorizing migration**

The second part of the chapter reviews how the diasporic and transnational literatures treat the impact of migration on families. It focuses primarily on the intersections between migrant and other aspects of identity and on the loss and identifications that are based on place.

Theories of migration have changed considerably over time. One reason is that earlier formulations evolved at a time when travel and communication were less available, and when most migrants were expected to settle in the country to which they moved. The rates of migration have intensified and far greater numbers of migrants and refugees draw from, and move towards, an ever widening number of countries (Brazier and Mannur, 2003; Faist, 2000; Papastergiades, 2000). In addition, the globalization of production, distribution and exchange, and evolution in communication technologies have opened up

societies in ways previously unimaginable so that, to some extent, all our lives are informed by 'diasporic space', by "the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of staying put" (Brah, 1996, p181).

There have been considerable shifts in the paradigms that dominate psychological and sociological theorizing. Earlier attempts to construct universalizing models of migration appear to be oversimplified in the context of increased recognition of the importance of socio-historical and geographic specificities. The criticism of oversimplification is also applicable to earlier attempts to understand the causes of migration. For example push-pull theories seem of limited value because it is impossible to categorize all factors in terms of whether they repel or attract and because they treat people as relative automatons, devoid of agency (Papastergiades, 2000).

There is also greater awareness of the need to take account of the researcher's own engagement with the issues under investigation (Byrne and Lentin, 2000; Stanley, 1993, 1996). Until recently, the migratory research paid relatively little attention to the experience of non-migrant kin. This neglect may reflect an uncertainty about whether a family continues to be a 'unit' when some members move and start their 'own' family. However, as much of the earlier work was undertaken by scholars who were migrants, these omissions may reflect a reluctance to engage with issues that could challenge their views of self, family



and migration, including differences in the opportunities and responsibilities of migrant and non-migrant kin.

Despite concerns like these, earlier formulations of migration raised a number of issues that continue to dominate the two main frameworks currently used to study migratory experiences, diaspora and transnational. Both frameworks recognize that contemporary as well as earlier migrants maintained various ties to their home countries at the same time as engaging with their countries of settlement. They are also similar in that they treat identities as subjective and social, as shaped by, and shaping, the discourses that dominate the societies with which they are connected. Another similarity is that to some extent, they are both concerned with the politics of belonging and citizenship and how people make sense of 'borderland identities' (Rosaldo, 1989). However, each framework examines migration through a somewhat different lens.

The concept of diaspora was originally associated with ancient Greece and later with slavery and colonization. There is considerable debate about whether the term should be confined to forced migrations or extended to any collectivity that retains a sense of national, racial and/or ethnic identity when dispersed across national, geographic and social divisions. It has been suggested that diaspora should be extended to represent more abstract aspirations, such as the desire for a homeland that represents greater freedom (Brazier and Mannur, 2003; Gilroy, 1997; Papastergiades, 2000).

Brah (1996) uses diaspora to signify a mental state of belonging that is grounded in movements that took place many generations before. She also coined the term 'diaspora space' to emphasize the importance of recognizing the consequences of movement and political struggles to define the local. Her concept of diaspora space combines internalized notions of identities with the idea that identities are shaped by, and shape, the dominant discourses. It draws attention to the multiple and potentially contested nature of identity claims. It assumes that these claims may not revolve around migration alone but represent "the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes" (1996, p208). This interpretation allows for the possibility that claims to a diasporic identity may be unrelated to, or pre-date migration, because they signify the desire for a less contested site of belonging. Brah's work accords with Hirshman's (1970) suggestion that an exit from a context in which one feels uncomfortable but powerless to change need not involve a physical exit. Instead, it is possible to remain and withdraw emotionally and mentally (Faist, 2000). It also accords with calls to recognize that home is not necessarily a comfortable space (Ang-Lygate, 1996; Hall, 1990; Martin and Mohanty, 2003).

One of the risks of focusing purely on diaspora is that it can lead to essentializing a place of origin as a natural site of belonging, rather than considering how notions of place are made and given meaning in culturally particular contexts of

historical and geographic interaction. This concern is less applicable to Brah's definition. However, it highlights the importance of recognizing that socialization and social reproduction often occur across borders in response to at least two social and cultural contexts (Olwig, 2002).

This issue is central to the growing literature devoted to transnational experiences, a literature that focuses on the ways in which families who are geographically dispersed "forge and sustain the multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together societies of origin and settlement, creating transnational social fields that cross national borders" (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1994 p6). As with diaspora, there is considerable debate about how the term transnational should be used, whether it should be used in a restricted way or to denote all situations where migrants maintain social, economic and/or political ties with their place of origin (Portes, 2001).

Initially, this literature tended to prioritize the public arenas of politics and citizenship and accorded little attention to transnational practices other than remittances and economic ties (Faist, 2000; Kofman, 2004; Vertovec, 1999). However, the focus has shifted as evident in attempts to look more closely at the experiences of children, parents and the elderly and how they are gendered (Hondagnue-Sotello, 2003; Parennas, 2001, 2003). These developments led to increased understanding of how transnational strategies vary depending on people's changing needs and desires as they move across the life cycle and how

the next generation's engagement with their parents' countries of origin seems to vary depending on the extent to which they have been reared within a transnational space (Gardner, 2002; Pries, 2004). This focus on families is also evident in researching migrations to and from the Caribbean (Bauer and Thompson, 2006; Chamberlain, 1997, 1999, 2006; Olwig, 2002) and in the publication of special journal editions devoted to analyzing how memories (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004) and rituals (Gardner and Grillo, 2002) inform the lives of transnational families and how families drive historical transmission, behaviour and movement, shaping and creating historical mentalities and identities.

These studies have revealed aspects of family, household, loss and place that were obscured by previous research as well as raising questions about identities that extend beyond the realms of migration. Nonetheless, important gaps in theorizing and research remain as reflected in the relative inattention to differences between migrant and non-migrant positions and sibling relationships

As Olwig (2002) argues, although the concrete social and economic transnational practices inform symbolic notions of home, a home is also unlikely to become a nodal point in concrete relations unless it receives validation through narrative and other forms of symbolic interchange, and comes to represent an abstract place of identification. Consequently, rather than trying to see whether theories of diaspora or transnationalism are more applicable to understanding white South

African migrations, it is more useful to draw on ideas that have emerged from both sets of literature. For example, the diasporic literature has much to offer because, in common with most white South Africans, all the research participants are able to claim an ancestry from elsewhere. The country's colonial past also means that to some extent Britain represents a cultural 'home' regardless of whether there is any family connection (Steyn, 2001; Israel, 1999; Jacobson, 1985). In addition, because the country of migration had been organized in terms of a much discredited political structure, in this context the concept of diaspora can be used to represent a desire for a less contested site of belonging. However, restricting the sample to people who remained in contact with family living in South Africa means that the transnational literature is also valuable because it offers insight into how real and 'imagined' encounters between migrant and non-migrant kin inform experiences of self, other and the migration.

Both sets of literatures are relevant to interpreting the responses of participants who claimed a Jewish identity. The concept of diaspora is often interpreted as a 'natural' aspect of the Jewish condition and used to denote how Jewish identities have been informed by histories of oppression and exile (Boyarin and Boyarin, 2003; Gilman, 1999). However, as Lentin (2002) indicates in relation to Irish Jews, like other transnational communities, diasporic Jewish communities are a transcultural mixture, forged in relation to particular settled communities, patterns of itinerancy and sovereignties of power.

### **2.2.1 The intersection of migrancy and other aspects of identity**

Until recently, acculturation was treated as a relatively one sided process. However, changes in theorizing and patterns of migration have led to increased engagement with the reciprocal enrichment and pluralism that can develop through merging two or more cultures (Bhabha, 1994; Braziel and Mannur, 2003; Raj, 2003; Faist, 2000).

This change has coincided with growing racialization, fear and bias against 'illegal immigrants', asylum seekers and refugees, as evident in responses to events like the 7<sup>th</sup> July bombings in London and more recent bombing attempts in London and Glasgow. It is difficult to know whether there is a causal connection. However, as Joffe (2007) suggests, the anxiety generated at times of crisis can elicit a process of othering that involves casting negative aspersions, including blame, on the Other. This pattern seems to underpin many of the current debates about the rights of nation-states to defend themselves against incoming migrants and the 'economic refugees' who come as asylums seekers, creating a sense of 'fortress Europe'. At the same time, there is also some recognition that reduced fertility rates have led to a need for skilled labour in areas such as teaching and health (Lewis, 2006). These developments mean that many of the stories that dominate current discourses position migrants as operating outside of space and time, forcing them to remain in dialogue with an essentialized 'homeland'. The prominence of these discourses affirms the idea that the boundaries of identity

are not only predicated on a geographic or political outside but on the internal presence of non-citizens (Brah, 1998; Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1998) or the 'stranger' (Kristeva, 1999).

Earlier migratory studies devoted little attention to the intersection between multiple and potentially contested sites of identity. As a result, they failed to consider how understandings of migrancy were dominated by the 'otherness' evoked by racialization encounters and/or experiencing oneself as part of an ethnic minority. Publications by authors like Agger (1992), Cole, Espin and Rothblum (1992), Papadopoulos and Hildebrand (1997) and Woodcock (1994) have helped to draw attention to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. It has been suggested that prioritizing these forms of migration has led to unfounded assumptions that migrations are unproblematic for white families and the communities they leave and move to (Bonnett, 1999). However, this is not necessarily the case as reflected in current preoccupations with East European migrations to Britain.

The relative omission of the position of whites is not particular to migratory studies as British born whites have attracted scant attention in other areas of academia (White, 1998). Where they are the focus of research, they tend to represent populations with a claim to an 'original elsewhere', people who are identified or define themselves as Irish (Chance, 1996; Walter, 1984), Italian (Fortier, 2002), Welsh (Jones, 2001), and Jewish (Graham, Schmool and

Waterman, 2007; Newman, 1985; Waterman and Kosmin, 1986). These omissions have contributed to rendering white diaspora relatively invisible and a tendency to conflate migrancy with racialization. Consequently, theorizing rarely takes account of migrations that are based primarily on choice; where there were no significant shifts in power in terms of race, language or socio-economic class; and where migrants have been positioned as implicit perpetrators of oppression in their countries of origin.

The failure to attend to whiteness is particularly relevant to understanding the limited literature devoted to South African migrations. A number of articles have been published on migrations to Australia, as in the work of Beer (1998), Polonsky, Scott and Suchard (1989; 1998) and Rule (1990, 1994). The prevalence of publications focused on Australia is unsurprising given that between 1997 and 1998 South Africa and China were the largest sources of immigrants to Australia. However, as with van Rooyen's (2000) analysis of what he calls a 'white exodus', these papers attend almost exclusively to issues of demography, the reconstruction of relational networks and integration with, and impact on, local communities. This focus suggests that assimilation of white South Africans has been straight forward.

There are notable exceptions. Sonn and Fisher (1996) focus on the experience of migrants who were categorized coloured under apartheid and show that, although migrating to Australia represented an opportunity to reject racialized



labels, constructions of self as racially inferior continued to endure. A more recent Australian publication addresses what they describe as the 'remigration' of South African Jews, a high percentage of whom have a recent ancestry from Lithuania (Tatz, Arnold and Heller, 2007). It draws on post-apartheid attempts to make sense of what Marks (2004) calls 'Apartheid and the Jewish Question', a situation in which a number of Jews played a significant role in opposing apartheid but where opposition was not evident at a communal level (Campbell, 2000; Frankel, 1999; Shimoni, 2003). They relate such factors as the ever-present sense of 'outsiderhood' (Marks, 2004) and risk of being caste as interlopers to Jewish responses to apartheid and ambivalence about adopting a stronger sense of Australian identity. As discussed in Chapter 1, the few publications devoted to migrating to Britain place greater emphasis on the legacies of apartheid (Bernstein, 1994; Israel 1999; Unterhalter 2000). However, they are not confined to white South Africans and focus primarily on migrant activists. As such, they omit to consider migrants who were less actively engaged in opposing apartheid, the experience of non-migrants and encounters between migrant and non-migrant kin. They also say relatively little about an additional aspect of identity that each of these three authors and I share: Jewish identities.

A second area of neglect relates to the intersection between migrant and gendered aspects of identity. Until recently, women migrants attracted scant attention. In view of the long history of female migrant labour and women's positioning as 'family migrants', this neglect suggests an assumption that their

rightful place is at home. However, increased understanding of how gender informs what is viewed as knowledge has focused greater attention on the intersection between migrancy and gender, as in the work of Zlotnick (1995) and publications edited by Ali, Coate and Wa Gogo (2000), and Cole, Espin and Rothblum (1992).

One area of study is concerned with the impact of migration on the status of women. Drawing on the experience of Sikh women who migrated from East Africa to Britain, Bhachu (1991) found that migration can provide women access to improved education and well-paid jobs. This view is contested by Fortier's (2002) finding of how collective expressions of an Italian identity reify the family values of Italian migrants in ways that naturalize asymmetries in gendered positions.

Another area of study is concerned with the extent to which gender contributes to controlling and delineating ethnic and racialized boundaries within what are termed as first world countries (Brah, 1996; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989). This is particularly evident in the growing literature devoted to domestic labour and analysis of how the category of domestic defines the boundaries of imaginaries of family and/or the European (Anderson, 2001, 2003; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Lewis, 2000; 2006; Lutz, 2008). Hochschild (2000) draws on the concept of 'globalized care chains' in outlining how the employment of women in highly paid jobs relies on women from the 'third world' leaving their

own families to care for the dependents of women of the 'first world'. As this issue is particularly relevant to the current research, I discuss these literatures in greater detail in Chapter 4, a chapter devoted to analyzing the triadic relationships between white mother, black nanny and white child. Nonetheless, it is important to mention the groundbreaking work of researchers like Cock (1989), Cole (1992) and Gordon (1985) and organizations such as the South African Black Sash here. They were instrumental in drawing attention to the plight of domestic workers and framing home as a site in which white women, rather than men, were responsible for maintaining racialized asymmetries in power and privilege.

However, important gaps remain. Although there are some indications of a change, most of the migratory literature focuses on globalized notions of 'the family', rather than considering how the challenges differ depending on whether the migration under consideration concerns a child, parent or sibling or child, and whether the findings are presented from the position of a migrant or non-migrant. Where particular relationships are considered, research tends to focus on intergenerational relationships. With notable exceptions, like Chamberlain's (1999) analysis of how sibling relationships inform constructions of migration to and from the Caribbean, and Song's (1997) analysis of how migration contribute to the cultural identities of Chinese siblings, relatively little attention has been paid to siblings. If, as mentioned earlier, many scholars engaged in studying

migration are migrants or have a recent history of family migrations, this neglect may relate to personal engagement with the issues they have studied.

The neglect of sibling positions is not particular to situations of migration as until recently, with notable exceptions (Bank and Khan, 1982, Dunn, 1993), most psychological theorizing and research demonstrated a similar pattern. However, as suggested by the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1991) and life course theorists, membership of a similar age cohort means that siblings are likely to have been exposed to a similar range of social discourses about the situations in which they live. Reaching the same or a different decision about whether to migrate or remain in a country is therefore likely to be particularly significant. Consequently, failure to consider the positions of siblings may reflect an unwillingness to reflect on relationships with the person who signifies the life these migrants did not chose.

There has been a similar pattern of underplaying of the position of non-migrant kin when a close relative migrates. The small but growing literature devoted to those who have been called the 'left behind' indicates that the position of non-migrants is not necessarily uncomplicated (Giles and Mu, 2005; Hadi, 1999; Nguyen, Toyota and Yeoh, 2006). For example, Coles' (2001) analysis of the experience of the parents whose children migrated from villages in Turkey suggests that reduced access to proximal support compounds the challenges posed by aging. Moreover, if migration is seen as the fulfilment of aspirations for

their children, it may be particularly difficult to acknowledge loss, thus complicating the process of adjusting to change. In her analysis of the positions of elderly non-migrant parents in India, Militiades (2002) shows how hired help allows the parents to live relatively independent lives but does not alleviate the loneliness or cultural contradictions posed by their children's absence. This may well be applicable to South African non-migrant parents as many are being cared for by hired help.

Personal and clinical experience means that I view these gaps in theorizing and research as particularly relevant to white South African migrations. Consequently, the research has been designed to extend understandings of the differences between the experiences of various family members, of sibling as well as intergenerational relationships and of the intersection between migrant, racialized and gendered aspects of identity.

### **2.2.2 Constructions of loss, change and continuity**

As reflected in the previous section, migration does not only involve moving from one geographic location: it requires a shift in meanings systems and the way in which self, family and other are experienced and understood. It is therefore unsurprising that negotiations of change and continuity are integral to theorizing migration. Since loss dominates most attempts to theorize accommodations to change, this section addresses loss in greater detail.

Amongst the key frames used to interpret the losses incurred through migration is the idea that there are parallels between the losses incurred during migration and individuation. Despite cultural variations, most psychological, sociological and anthropological theories view separation as intrinsic to psychological development (Bowlby, 1980; Crittenden, 2000; Haley, 1980; Klein, 1975; Stern, 1985). This understanding of loss is exemplified in the proposal that it is “at the very moment of realizing our own independence, we are dependent upon another to recognize it” (Benjamin 1984, p293). Benjamin does not assume that the self becomes separate in the sense of being independent from others for recognition, but that it is possible to act in ways that express one's own wishes and are not an unwitting extension of another person.

Aktar (1995) draws on individuation in proposing that the combination of ‘culture shock’ (Handlin, 1973) and reduced access to the relationships and concrete objects which have been intrinsic to subjectivity challenge the newcomer's psychic organization. He views migration as having the potential to create a sense of flux reminiscent of earlier separation-individuation and therefore as triggering feelings that pertain to earlier experiences of loss. This view draws on Mahler, Pines and Bergman's (1975) formulation of how the child separates and individuates in response to an initial symbiotic unity with the mother. However, in contrast to the views of Benjamin (1998) and Gilligan (1982), it reflects an assumption that individuals move from a state of dual oneness to a singular

oneness and grow out of relationships rather than becoming more active within them.

Aktar suggests that this disorganization can also lead to a 'third individuation'. His notion that a third position can emerge from situations of change echoes Bhabha's (1994) proposal that situations of uncertainty can become a site in which aspects of self and meaning systems are brought together in a different way. It is reminiscent of Pratt's (1992) 'contact zones' and Rosaldo's (1989) 'cultural borderlands', concepts that signify how, instead of individuals operating in relation to one cultural or meaning system, they have to find ways of negotiating zones of similarity and differences within and between them. Aktar's attention to diversities of responses supports findings that have emerged from analyzing the responses of people faced with other disruptions to their anticipated lives, for example a life threatening illness (Altschuler and Dale, 1999; Kleinman, 1998; Little, Paul, Jordens and Sayers, 2002; Weingarten, 1994).

Other scholars like Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) have drawn on psychoanalytic theories in outlining ideas that have emerged from their clinical experience. They argue that geographic journeys tend to be accompanied by inner journeys, journeys that provoke anxieties and fears in the migrant about the loss of loved objects, aspects of self, 'motherland' and a sense of being held. Sluzki (1979) draws on clinical experience as well. However, as a systemic psychotherapist, he places greater emphasis on the implications for interpersonal relationships in the

here-and-now. Although Sluzki's (1993) later work draws attention to the socio-political nature of migrations, in common with Grinberg and Grinberg, much of his earlier work was predicated on the understanding that responses to migration unfold in a series of set phases.

Each of these authors acknowledges that migration may be empowering. However, more frequently, stories of gain are framed as masking loss and as protecting the migrant from facing the pain they are unwilling, or as yet unable, to acknowledge. They also suggest that aspects of loss and cultural dissonance that are underplayed by the first generation may re-emerge as a clash between first and second generations, or in expressions of disdain for those who were 'left behind'.

Falicov (1998) highlights the need to pay more attention to specificities in accounting for loss, including whether migration is voluntary or not, the proximity between the country of origin and that in which migrants live, gender and generation, whether the family unit moves together or sequentially, and the nature of the reception migrants receive. She drawing on Boss' (1991, 1999) notion of ambiguous loss in illustrating how, in situations of migrancy, it is possible to remain a 'psychological presence' in the context of physical absence and a 'psychologically absence' despite being physically present. This latter is reflected situation in which migrant parents are too depressed to be actively engaged with their children. Although she discusses the value of being able to



retain those who are not present as a supportive presence in situations of uncertainty, she draws attention to the risks of basing one's decisions on the views of those who are not present and therefore do not fit with current circumstances. Walder (1997) alludes to this sense of an ambiguous loss in arguing that the desire to dis-identify with his positioning as a white South African meant that for a long time, his identity revolved around the presence of an absence, a presence which denoted aspects of self and cultural heritage he found unpalatable.

Miller and Stiver (1991) introduce a parallel idea. Focusing on the here-and-now, they propose that when there is an added desire to connect, there is often a tendency to censor what is considered unacceptable, including loss. However, instead of increasing the possibility of closeness, censoring is more likely to exacerbate relational distance as it relies on discrediting aspects of self that are likely to have been integral to identity. Alvarez (1995) uses this notion of a relational paradox in arguing that one response to being defined in ways that do not fit with one's self image is to reject aspects of the 'host' culture. Another is to 'lose' or deny aspects of one's cultural identity and emotional connection to significant others that could otherwise provide guidance to adjusting to life in a different society. As both options involve censoring, they pose a risk to relational connection. I return to this notion in discussing reunions and the performance of traditional rituals in Chapter 7.

Swirsky (1999) highlights the socio-historical particularities of loss in her analysis of the accounts of Jewish women who moved to Britain from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century, or to escape the Nazi regime. She proposes that amongst women who migrated from Germany, the tendency to mask loss relates to the scars of 'bifurcated identities' (Hoffman, 1991), to the discomfort of being German and Jewish in contexts that were hostile to both. However, draws on the work of Jarrett-Macauley (1996) in illustrating the similarities in their positions in proposing that for both sets of migrants, the "life that is lived after migration is different not simply in terms of place, of culture, usually of language, of the events that are lived out; within that different life a different identity, a different self is (re)constructed, within 'a body occupying a foreign space'" (1999, p195). Although Swirsky is a white South African migrant and Jewish, she omits to mention how her analysis has been informed by the 'bifurcation' of her own insider-outsider positionings. However, her reference to the embodied nature of identity suggests that for white South Africans, including her and me, migration may have represented an opportunity to dis-identify with the embodied nature of racialized and/or Jewish notions of self.

Hammerton's (2004) analysis of the letters and accounts of migrants who moved from Britain to Canada in the 1950s illustrate the importance of recognizing oscillations in experiences of gain and loss, and how prioritizing one aspect of this continuum may mask another. In the early post-migratory years, his sample emphasized triumph over material and cultural obstacles, but expressed more

feelings of loss and concern about broken family ties once their access to social networks in their country of settlement reduced, as they approached retirement and their children became older. He argues that the earlier emphasis on success was a form of protection against the losses and uncertainties posed by migrating.

Although I would not dispute the idea that all migration entails some level of loss prioritizing, by focusing exclusively on loss, researchers may obscure factors that ameliorate loss and the value of exposure to more than one socializing and/or language system (Bledin, 2003; Burck, 2005). Consequently, instead of attempting to establish whether migration is more likely to lead to loss or gain, this research explores the connections between these experiences as a way of analyzing what might account for diversities in portrayals and experiences.

### **2.2.3 Constructions of place, home and belonging**

Developments in theorizing identities and memory have led to the idea that, although cultures might appear to be placed, it is not because they 'are' but because that is how they are imagined, because of a tendency to landscape cultural identities. The idea that place may not represent a 'container' but is bounded by the ways in which people perceive it is exemplified in Said's (1990) 'imagined geographies'. It is also reflected in Appadurai's (2003) 'scapes', the idea that worlds are constituted by historical imaginings of people or groups who are spread all over the world, and Olwig's (1997) 'cultural sites', the idea that

identities might be informed by attachment to particular sites like a family home rather than the nation state. Although there are differences in the issues these theorists prioritize, their work reflects Anderson's (1983) earlier suggestion that an imagined sense of community is as important to identity as events that take place in the external world. It highlights the importance of recognizing that the imaginings of place represent a particular moment in the networks of social relations.

These ideas have been accompanied and/or informed by increased interest in the power relationships that underpin place-based identity claims and how place informs, and is informed by, constructions of racialized, gendered, ethnicized and classed identities (Massey, 1994; Uguris, 2000). Martin and Mohanty highlight the symbolic and embodied nature of place in proposing that "home [is] an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance" (2003, p90). This notion of blindness underpins Ginsberg's (2006) analysis of the ways in which differences between the living quarters of white South African employers and their black employees served to naturalize apartheid-based understandings of a racialized 'them' and 'us'.

Although place may be implicated in many identity claims, it is particularly significant to contexts of migration, because in addition to other potential differences, migrant and non-migrant kin have to make sense of living in different localities and having access to different national identities. This focus is evident

in transnational analysis of reunions aimed at performing traditional rituals. Anthropologists have long argued that traditional rituals enable family members to assert a sense of belonging and continuity in contexts of change (Imber-Black and Roberts, 1992; Scheff, 1979; van Gennep, 1909). In the context of migration, they can enable family members who live apart to operationalize an ideal and normally unattainable concept of family. However, more recent research indicates that they may also be sites through which discontinuities are affirmed and displayed, where the differences between 'real' experiences of family and those that are imagined become more prominent (Gardner, 2002; Olwig, 2002, Salih, 2002). Al-Ali (2002) illustrates this by analyzing the accounts of family members who were separated as a result of the war in Bosnia. Her work suggests that in highly politicized contexts, reunions can become a context for conflating personal and politicized aspects of identity. This means that the tensions which are located between migrants and non-migrants may reflect individual ambivalence about past political positions and decisions about whether to migrate or stay.

The literature suggests that portrayals of Jewish migrations offer particular, yet far from homogenous, portrayals of how place contributes to negotiating multiple aspects of identity. There is considerable debate about whether claims to being Jewish signify religious affiliation, culture, ethnicity, biology or a combination of all of these factors. Nonetheless, much of the literature prioritizes legacies of exile and oppression. Boyarin and Boyarin's (2003) express this view in proposing that

for Jews, instead of cultural identification being located in place, it is more rooted in what Appadurai (1990) calls 'scapes', in genealogy and traditional customs. This does not mean that a symbolic attachment to place does not exist, as reflected in the frequency with which the terms homeland and diaspora are used to denote Jews' relationship with Israel regardless of whether they live elsewhere.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are signs of increased academic interest in Jewish migrations from South Africa. Inside the country, a series of conferences and publications attest to growing interest, or perhaps pressure, to account for 'the' Jewish response to apartheid (Campbell, 2000; Jacobson, 2000; Leveson, 2000; Shain and Frankenthal, 1999; Shain and Mendelsohn, 2000, 2008; Shimoni, 2003; Stier, 2004; Suttner, 1997). This work is predicated on the understanding and analysis of the ever present risk of being acts as interlopers (Marks, 2004). Histories of displacement and oppression have added significance in this context as more than 70% of Jews came from Eastern Europe, particularly Lithuania, around the 1880's. However, differences in responses to apartheid indicate that although these histories might have introduced particular discourses through which meanings could be constructed, they could not determine the positions Jews occupied in relation to apartheid (Campbell, 2000; Frankel, 1999). Consequently, debates about the legacies of insider and outsider revolve around whether collective histories of anti-Semitism sensitize or desensitize Jews to the 'othering' of someone else. These questions

remain relevant to understanding the present, as evident in expressions of concern about the risk of Jews adopting reactionary responses to a more open society (Davis, 2000), and publications aimed at illustrating Jewish contributions to redressing the consequences of past inequities in health, education and social care (Kosmin, Shain, Goldberg and Brook, 1999).

Nonetheless, there seems to be a reluctance to consider how Jewish and white identities intersect. For example, in their analysis of the religious affiliations of 243 Jewish South African migrants to Canada, Schoenfeld, McCabe and Schoenfeld (1999) found that migration led to a move from religious affiliation being taken for granted to choice. They interpret this change in terms of a desire to fit in with local communities and contemporary constructions of religiosity. What is not considered is how this shift relates to living in a place in which there was less of a need to emphasize aspects of identity that qualify the implicit positions as white privileged and oppressive. Notable exceptions include Tatz, Arnold and Heller's (2007) analysis of how this legacy informed what they call the 'remigration' of South African Jews and Shain and Mendelsohn's (2008) account of the history of South African Jews. Although their publications focus on the identity consequences of Jewish claims to an attachment with elsewhere, it offers insight into how other white South Africans have dealt with access to alternative place-based identity claims.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In mapping the theoretical ideas that underpin the research, this chapter reviewed the various ways in which responses to events that challenge preferred notions of self have been treated in the academic literature.

The first part of the chapter focused on developments in theorizing and researching identity, memory, and racialization. Drawing on discourse and social constructionist theories, it reviewed the move towards viewing identity, 'race' and memory as mobile, potentially contested, imagined, and culturally constructed. This was followed by a discussion about psychoanalytic interpretations of identity, memory and racialization and how they allow for an analysis of aspects of self and family that are unconscious or difficult to articulate. Both frameworks of interpretation adopt a relatively constructionist position. Consequently, they have the potential to develop 'narrative' rather than 'historical truths' (Spence, 1982) about the migrations of apartheid-based white South Africans. However, I recognize the limitations of this approach because "in societies with long histories of exploiting differences to maintain inequities of power, the sense of identity is not just a matter of negotiation [...], but a site of profound uncertainty and struggle" (Walder, 1997, p96).



The second part of the chapter reviews ideas that have emerged from the two lenses that dominate the current migratory literature. It draws on the international literature and the limited literature devoted to South African migrations in discussing the tensions between unitary and multiple and/or intersecting aspects of identity; the dualities of loss and gain; and how place is imagined and acted upon. Because the research treats access to Jewish identities as a particular site for analyzing how different aspects of identity are used and referenced, the review included a discussion about the particular treatment of Jewish migrations.

Attention was drawn to gaps in theorizing and research such as the relative neglect of the position of non-migrants, of the consequences of migration for sibling relationships and the intersection between migrant, politicized, racialized and gendered aspects of identity. Although some of these gaps are being addressed in more recent migratory research, as my personal experience is that they are central to South African migrations, they provide a guide to decisions about methodology, and in particular, sampling.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological approach to exploring how white South Africans construct the impact of migration to Britain during the apartheid era on their sense of self, family and positionings within the societies in which they live. It draws on issues raised in the previous chapter in outlining the research questions and rationale for adopting a narrative approach to the analysis before presenting a detailed account of the sample selection, interview process, recording and interpretation of the data and approach to interrogating my own engagement with the data.

Decisions about methodology were primarily theoretically informed: they drew on the social constructionist understanding that it is through telling stories that we discover ourselves, reveal ourselves to others and make 'real' the phenomena that are in our consciousness, (Gergen, 2001, Reissman, 1993). Because most of the data was generated through spoken language, the research required a methodology equipped to take account of how language constitutes the social world we see as relevant. I anticipated that reflecting on migrations from South Africa about ten years after apartheid had been dismantled was likely to place individuals in troubled subject positions. As such, the methodology was also informed by psychoanalytic interpretations as they place particular emphasis on

the idea that knowing and thinking are not confined to rational thought and cognitions but include affective and relational processes. This led to prioritizing a methodology equipped to take account of the 'un-languaged' or non-discursive, a biographical interpretive approach to narrative analysis (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000).

### **3.1 Research questions**

The research questions were designed to explore the intersection between migration, family positioning and the legacy of racialized privilege, and how participants made sense of the difference between their past and present understandings of self, family and apartheid.

Although these questions focus on apartheid-based migrations, they were designed with the intention of throwing light on how the personal is constituted in and through the social in relation to other migrations.

As the research focuses on issues that have received little academic attention, two of the questions were broadly framed to be able to explore in an open way what migration might mean to participants' understanding of self, family and positioning within the social contexts of their lives:

**1) How have migrations from South Africa during the apartheid era informed white South Africans' constructions of self and family?**

**2) How has the official dismantling of apartheid affected the ways in which migrant and non-migrant kin make sense of the challenges migration posed to self and family?**

A third question was added following the first three interviews.

**3) How have experiences of migration been informed by racialized relationships within the home, by the triadic relationship between white mother, black nanny and white child?**

These questions were informed by my understanding that the concept of the Other is central to interrogating white South Africans' constructions of migration. They draw on the various ways in which cultural theorists interpret othering, as for example in Said's (1978) illustration of how the notion of the 'Orient' can be used to construct and affirm the superiority of European cultures. They have also been informed by psychoanalytic theories of how external processes inform internalized experiences of self and other, as in gendered interpretations of othering (Benjamin, 1998 and Chodorow, 1978).

Debasement of the other forms a constant dynamic in society. However, at times of potential crisis and threat, the tendency to focus on the negative and threatening nature of 'others' becomes intensified (Joffe, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 1, in most cases migration took place at least twenty or thirty years before. The ages of the participants meant that in most cases, they were facing increased separation from their children and real or imagined death of a parent who, in the case of migrants, lived elsewhere. Othering is therefore particularly relevant to exploring how individuals made sense of losses and uncertainties posed by disjunctions to anticipated experiences of self and family. As the highly racialized regime that had governed South Africa had been dismantled, it is similarly relevant to considering responses to the collapse of the system that had granted them and their family privileged status.

This meant that the research required a methodology equipped to address how othering was implicated in claiming, affirming, contesting and refuting identity positions. Since the research focused on migration from a country in which I, in common with the research participants, had been accorded privileged racialized status, it also required a methodology that allowed for an analysis of how I and the participants negotiated and marked the boundaries of our positions as insiders and outsiders to this privilege

### **3.2 Theoretical approach to analysis**

The above considerations led to selecting an adapted version of Hollway and Jefferson (1997; 2000) and Rosenthal's (1993, 1998) biographical-interpretative narrative approach, an approach that prioritized the intersection between biography, history and social processes.

There is considerable debate about what constitutes narrative. Issues under debate include: whether the term should refer to discrete or extended sequences of talk, the relationship between narrating and reality, and the extent to which the interviewer informs the interviewing process, analysis of data and what is presented as 'knowledge' about an area (Mishler, 1986; Reissman, 1993).

However, what unites most narrative theorists is an interest in the storied nature of human conduct (Sarbin, 1986), in how individuals deal with experience by constructing stories and listening to the stories of others. Their work is predicated on the understanding that the self is storied through interactions with others and that the language we use does not only reflect experience: it produces meaning. This view draws on Ricouer's (1984) proposal that it is through narrating that the spurious contingent perceptions that comprise experience are given a context, constrained and humanized.

Although narrative analysis investigates human character, it focuses on what is told to a real and/or imagined audience. This does not mean that all lived experience is storied, but that narratives of self represent constructions and claims of identity. It also does not mean that analyzing narratives offers a route to a real or essentialized notion of inner experience. However, it allows researchers to infer something about what it feels like to be part of a certain story, revealing character as illuminated and constructed through particular events (Mattingley, 1998).

These ideas draw on the discursive view that language is integral to constructing the reality of the experiencing self and that all forms of speaking are from a particular position (Foucault, 1980). Discursive ideas are based on the understanding that language is both performative and constitutive. Language and narrating is understood to sculpt and make available both thought and action. It is seen to be indicative of how individuals 'do' identity work. Discourse is seen to make available the subject positions through which meanings are presented, understood and negotiated (Davies and Harré, 1990). These subject positions have consequences as troubled and untroubled positions are offered, taken up and contested in interactions (Wetherell, 1998).

The positions that are available to be taken up through discourse slot into culturally recognized patterns of talk. This means that culturally informed relationships of power, privilege and authority inform the frameworks we use for

encoding and representing experience. Consequently, it is impossible to separate what is personal from what is collective and cultural. It also means that attention to the language offers insight into the links between personal and collective identities, into "individual and collective action and meanings, as well as the social processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed" (Laslett, 1999, p392).

Although attention to language is relevant to understanding the identity claims that underpin all forms of narrating, it has added importance when seeking to understand responses to troubled subject positions. It offers a vehicle for examining how narrators use different discourse registers when they feel discomforted by the way in which they are framed by the discourses dominating the contexts in which they are placed (Jenkins, 2001). Attention to the use of certain verbs, qualifiers, and descriptors offer insight into how narrators position themselves in relation to the stories they tell. It is therefore possible to examine identity claims through what Bakhtin (1981) calls 'heteroglossia', a term that literally means others' words. The term draws attention to the way in which utterances are positioned in relation to a number of different and potentially contradictory contexts. In this context, deconstructing the multiple meanings associated with particular words illustrates that words like black, white, coloured and non-white are far from empty term, because under apartheid, they signified the replication of oppressive practice.



As discussed in Chapter 2, there is currently greater recognition that narrating, memory and experience are inextricably linked and that our memories of the past change as the stories of our lives develop and grow in complexity. This means that memories tend to change in response to altered constructions of self, other and the past (Antze and Lambek, 1996; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1999; Linde, 1993). However, although discursive ideas have contributed to the idea that identities are shifting, fragmentary and multiple, much of popular literature remains predicated on the idea that, despite changes in circumstances, core aspects of who we are remain the same. The desire to repair what Derrida (1978) calls 'broken stories' by retaining a grand narrative of core sense of self is reflected in many accounts of responses to migration (Alvarez, 1995; Ben Ezer, 2006; Swirsky, 1999). It is also reflected in the accounts of people facing other disruptions to the lives that might have been, for example divorce (Reissman, 1990), infertility (Yngvesson and Mahoney, 2000) and a situation I have focused on in my clinical work, life-limiting illness (Bury, 1982; Little, Paul, Jordens, and Sayers, 2002; Kleinman, 1998; Squire, 2007; Weingarten, 1994).

In certain contexts, altered constructions of the past present little or no problem to how we see ourselves and wish to be seen by others. Elsewhere, more significant levels of reconstruction are required to ensure that memories fit with current understandings of self and other. Because narrative analysis offers a way to explore the link between earlier and later selves, it is well suited to exploring

how people reflect on their understanding of migration and legacies of white privilege in the context of a much altered present.

However, as mentioned earlier, because I imagined that reflecting on these aspects of experience might place subjects in troubled positions, I was equally interested in the untold. One of the reasons people choose to keep silent in certain situations is that the untold relates to issues that harm one's self-image (Bar-On, 1999). In contexts of migration, the desire or pressure to assimilate may mean that this is particularly evident (Alvarez, 1999; Ben Ezer, 2002). However, another possibility is that these stories are not within conscious awareness and memory, but break through into what is being said in the form of extra linguistic 'small story' patterns, such as disruptions in narrating and changes in pitch and tone.

Some of my interest in what remains unsaid relates to personal experience. My own ambivalence about researching white South Africans' constructions of migration alerted me to the likelihood that it might touch on issues that feel uncomfortable or too risky to express in words. My impression was heightened as friends, family and colleagues veered between being appalled, dismissive or contesting the academic value of such a study to sharing their own or someone else's painfully contested migration stories. These impressions increased my sense that researchers cannot understand participants' inner world without acknowledging their experience in the world, and that experiences of the world

cannot be understood without knowing how inner worlds allow them to experience their outer world (Frosh, 2005; Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000).

These personal and theoretical understandings contributed to the decision to prioritize a methodology that could enable me to take account of the emotions surrounding this area of research, of how experiences are spoken through discourse and of the less consciously known and unconscious. It led to selecting a methodology that could engage in what Althusser (1971) called 'symptomatic reading', that could read text through what is said as well as through the absences, 'lacuna' and silences that the more 'explicit discourses' conceal.

This led to employing an adapted version of Hollway and Jefferson's (1997, 2000) psychosocial and Rosenthal's (1993, 1998) Gestalt-based biographical interpretive approaches to narrative. The method was chosen because it is person centred. As it involves encouraging participants to associate freely in relation to one central question, it allows for silences and the discomfort about reflecting on certain aspects of experience to emerge and as well creating data through which the power dynamics of the research interviews can be considered. This enabled the analysis to draw on the psychoanalytic concepts of renunciation, repudiation and projective identification as ways of considering what might underpin the taking up of certain positions rather than others in relation to the discourses that dominate the context in which participants live. Whilst I recognize that there are significant differences between research and

therapeutic interactions, the approach also enabled me to draw on the concepts of self-reflexivity, transference and counter-transference to explore how my subjective involvement shaped the interview data and analysis.

Epistemologically, instead of viewing truth as existing out there, or as emerging from faithful representation of a past world, the research treats truth as emerging from the shifting connections narrators forge between the past, present and future and as arising from material experiences as well as the narrating of such experiences. Stories are understood to be subjective in that they contain 'narrative truths' (Spence, 1982) that may be close to or removed from what is understood to be 'historical' truth. This does not mean that the material is irrelevant but that it is important to consider the 'real' effects discourse has on experience.

However, this approach raises questions about traditional interpretations of the meaning of reliability and validity. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) indicate, reliability usually refers to the consistency and replicability of results, a view that is based on the assumption that meanings can be controlled. If, as suggested by social constructionist as well as psychoanalytic theories, meanings are unique as well as shared, the situations researchers analyze are not replicable. As such, this notion of reliability is inappropriate.

Nonetheless, it is important to take account of reliability and validity if these research findings are to be used to extend understandings of the ways in which migration constructs experiences of self and family and of how personal aspects of self intersect with the political. To address, I contextualize the quotes I draw on in terms of what had been said before and other relevant aspects of participants' accounts. Although the analysis does draw on some relatively brief quotes, more frequently it focuses on extended quotes. This means that, even though others might derive a different understanding from analyzing such quotes, they are able to see and interrogate the way in which the analysis unfolded.

### **3.3 Research participants**

The participants were recruited through a process of snowballing and were all at least one step removed from my friendship and family network. The following four tables provide some details on each of the participants.

Tables 1 and 2, which focus on the British-based women and men respectively, provides participants' current ages, their age at the time of migrating, whether their parents remained in South Africa after they left and whether they are currently alive, family migratory and cultural legacies, the number of children they have, whether their partner was born in South Africa or not, their order of birth in relation to siblings, and siblings' current place of residence. Table 3, which focuses on South African-based parents, provides participants' current age, their

children's ages at the time of migrating, where they were born, family migratory and cultural legacies and their children's current place of residency. Table 4, which focuses on South African-based siblings, details participants' current age, age at the time their siblings migrated, family migratory and cultural legacies, the number of children they have, siblings' place of residence, parents' place of residence and whether parents are currently alive.

Each table also indicates where another family member was interviewed for this research.

**Table 1: Migrant participants (women)**

Pseudonym	Rachael	Mary (daughter of Ruth and Isaac)	Melanie (daughter of Sarah)	Gillian	Sonja (sister of Greg)	Leslie
Age	47	45	44	60	54	60
Age at migration	25	27	26	30	29	24
Parents	Remained in SA, father died	Mother + father in SA father unwell	Mother + father in SA father frail	Remained in SA, now dead	Remained in SA, father now dead	Remained in SA, now dead
Family migratory + cultural legacy	India	UK	Lithuania Jewish	Lithuania Jewish	UK, India Afrikaans	Lithuania Jewish
Children	1	1	2	4 (one died)	2	2
Partner	SA born	UK born	SA born, Lithuanian Jewish ancestry	SA born, Lithuanian Jewish ancestry	SA born	SA born, Lithuanian Jewish ancestry
Siblings	Younger of two siblings	Middle of three siblings	Middle of three siblings	Older of four siblings	Middle of five siblings	Older of two siblings
Siblings' residence	UK	UK	UK, elsewhere	SA	UK, SA	SA

**Table 2: Migrant participants (men)**

<b>Pseudonym UK</b>	<b>Charlie (brother of Alex)</b>	<b>Martin</b>	<b>Steven</b>	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Jack</b>
Age	55	42	48	47	80
Age at migration	23	14	23	24	29
Parents	SA, both frail	Both parents moved to UK, Father now dead	SA, father frail	UK	Both remained in SA, now dead
Family migratory + cultural legacy	UK (generations back)	Lithuania, Jewish	Germany, Lithuania Jewish	UK (generations back)	Lithuania Jewish
Children	2	1	2	1	4
Partner	SA born	UK born	UK	SA born	SA born, Lithuanian Jewish ancestry
Siblings	Older of two	Youngest of three	Older of two	Youngest of four	Oldest of four
Siblings' residence	SA	UK, elsewhere	UK	SA (one died)	SA

**Table 3: Non-migrant participants (parents)**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Sarah (mother of Mary)</b>	<b>Ruth (mother of Melanie)</b>	<b>Isaac (father of Melanie)</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Annette</b>
Age	69	78	80	80	70
Children's age at migration	19, 24, 27	23, 24, 26	23, 24, 26	25	23
Place of birth	UK	SA	SA	Germany	SA
Family migratory + cultural legacy	UK	Lithuania, Jewish	Lithuania Jewish	Germany Jewish	SA, Germany
Children' residency	UK	UK, elsewhere	UK, elsewhere	UK, SA	UK, SA

**Table 4: Non-migrant participants (siblings)**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Alex (brother of Charlie)</b>	<b>Sandra</b>	<b>Heather</b>	<b>Greg (brother of Sonja)</b>
Age	54	54	50	56
Age when siblings left	20	32	28, 42	27
Family migratory + Cultural legacy	UK (generations back)	Lithuania, Eastern Europe Jewish	English-Irish Jewish (generations back)	UK, Afrikaans
Children	0	3 (SA)	3 (SA)	1 (SA)
Siblings' residency	UK	UK, SA	UK, SA, elsewhere	UK, SA
Parents	Both in SA, frail	Both in SA, frail	Both in SA	Remained in SA. Father now dead

The tables show that the sample comprised eleven South Africans who migrated to Britain and five parents and four siblings who continue to live in South Africa. The ages of the migrants ranged between 42 and 60 years, with the exception of Jack who had just turned 80. The majority migrated between 1970 and 1987, although Jack left in the mid-fifties and the son of one of the parents, Annette, left in 1990.

As the research is aimed at exploring how participants deal with the intersection between personal and political aspects of identity, it is useful to mention the extent to which participants portrayed themselves as actively engaged in opposing or supporting the government. However, to safe guard confidentiality, instead of providing information about each participant on the table, I have chosen to comment on the sample as a whole.

No attempt was made to recruit participants on the basis of political engagement. The migrant and non-migrant siblings included four participants who mentioned their involvement with and/or membership of the African National Congress (ANC). One of these four spoke about his role in acts of sabotage, and in common with another, needing to leave the country to avoid imprisonment and being unable to return until apartheid was dismantled. Two other migrants presented their parents as playing an active role in opposing apartheid: one was forced to leave the country on an exit visa as a result of his involvement with the



ANC and the other worked through the South African Communist Party (SACP). Several mentioned their unwillingness and refusal to serve in the army, but I did not ask whether avoiding conscription restricted them from returning. Although most of the other migrants and non-migrant siblings mentioned attending student protests, the majority referred to an unwillingness to adopt a more active stance, the dangers of engaging more actively in opposing apartheid and/or prioritized aspects of identity that marginalized their positioning as white South Africans. With the exception of one parent's membership of the Springbok Legion, a short-lived anti-apartheid movement, none of the parents framed themselves as having taken an active stance against apartheid. However, as with the rest of the participants, none claimed to have been members of the Nationalist party or to have actively supported the apartheid regime.

Two others agreed to be seen. However, before meeting, one woman, the sister of an emigrant, withdrew after learning that her sister was getting divorced. Another, a migrant, withdrew on hearing that her South African-based father had been diagnosed with a life-limiting condition. In both cases, the decision was linked with a significant change in the life course of another family member. My understanding is that these events were situations that faced these people with a heightened sense of the constraints migration imposes on proximal practical and emotional support. As such, being asked to reflect on the consequences of migration at that point is likely to have felt particularly painful and/or risky to consider.

In the majority of cases, one member of a family was interviewed. This meant that most of the research findings drew on an analysis of one family member's self account. However, as seen from the tables above, the sample also included the pairings of two sets of migrant and non-migrant siblings, of a non-migrant mother and her migrant daughter, and of a migrant child and a joint interview with her parents. These examples were used to explore some of the multiple and diverse subject positions available within the same family.

Although most decisions about sampling were pre-set and informed by the questions the research was aiming to address, others emerged as the research evolved. For example, because the research was exploratory, I decided to adopt a relatively flexible approach to interviewing. The joint interview arose because, although I had said I was interviewing people individually, on arriving to interview a mother whose three children had migrated, I found that she and her husband expected to be seen together and I decided to proceed as they had intended.

One of the potential limitations of the sample, the restricted period in which I required migrations to have taken place, was deliberately designed. Because the research aimed at deconstructing the legacy of apartheid-based racialized privilege, I confined the sample to situations where migrations took place at a time when the dismantling of apartheid was not commonly seen to be inevitable,

before 1991. Therefore, it does not take account of the experience of more recent post-apartheid migrations.

Since the aim was to investigate how family members negotiate changes in relationship when some family members chose to leave and others to remained in apartheid South Africa, the sample was restricted to people who were actively engaged with family members living in South Africa and/or Britain. There were two exceptions: Martin who migrated with his family of origin at the age of 14, and Steven, who migrated alone but was later joined by his only sibling and parents. They were included because at the time of their interviews I was not aware of this. However, having heard their accounts, I felt their stories offered valuable points of comparison to what was said by others.

The sample was confined to families who were classified white under apartheid. This allowed the research to include a migrant whose claim to whiteness was more contested, Rachael who was 'born Indian' but reclassified white at the age of four years. Although her situation is unusual, her account presents an extreme version of what it meant to 'do whiteness during apartheid and to leave a place in which experiences of family were bound up with learning and protecting the boundaries as white privileged.

The sample only included people who were middle class and/or had tertiary education. However, since whites had privileged access to educational and

employment opportunities under apartheid, this is not un-representative of the positions of most, although not all, white South Africans.

As the research aimed to extend understanding of how migration informs past and future constructions of family, the sample was also restricted to families where the migrant is now a parent. This does not mean that I regard the stories of migrants who are not parents as having no bearing on the research questions. However, this decision enabled the research to analyze the meanings ascribed to the next generation's constructions of migration and apartheid and how intergenerational relations impact on constructions of identities.

Other sampling decisions were not pre-decided. For example, soon after starting I became aware that recruiting participants through friendship and professional networks meant that I was interviewing people from families where migrants had left when they were between the ages of 20 and 30. This may have been because this was the age range in which my friends and I had ourselves migrated. Rather than attempting to recruit family members where migration took place at other stages in the life course, the sample was confined to this cohort. The crystallizing of this serendipitous sampling criterion was partly informed by my personal and theoretical understanding that, although there are likely to be considerable variations, most families tend to renegotiate patterns of relational connection when someone in the family reaches these ages (Carter and McGoldrick 1999; Elder, 1994). I realized that this cohort could allow the

research to explore the ways in which constructions of migration intersect with age-related changes in family positions, for example experiences of becoming parents, wage earners and coming to terms with their parents', or their own, aging. However, it was also informed by the knowledge that, with a few exceptions, all white South African men had been required to attend army camps following schooling or tertiary education. Because refusing to serve in the army carried a prison sentence, significant numbers left before or after serving in army 'camps'. Hence focusing on this cohort, enabled the research to consider how constructions of migration were informed by men's, and to some extent women's, experiences of military service.

After an initial period of recruitment I also noticed that each participant referred to an ancestry from elsewhere, and that about half the people I had interviewed identified themselves as Jewish. Because Jewish identities are widely associated with histories of exile and oppression, I decided to maintain this balance and interview ten people who identified themselves as Jewish and ten who did not. This enabled the analysis to treat Jewish identity claims as a particular site for examining how identifications with an 'elsewhere' inform constructions of migration and positioning as a white South African. As I identify myself as Jewish, it also took account of a more personal desire to interrogate the way in which concepts like a 'Jewish sense of family' and Jewish legacies of oppression and exile are used and referenced in constructing of the impact of migrations and apartheid on self and family. Whilst these sampling decisions were informed by

the issues I was attempting to explore, they mean that the research findings do not take account of how class and inactive family ties inform migration or of how migration informs constructions of family when migrants do not have children.

The accounts of several other people are not included in the analysis. Two were interviewed in the pilot stage of the project but excluded as they did not fit in with the requirements I was using to select the sample. I also interviewed two people who have no personal connection to South Africa but have written extensively on the identity implications of migration, others who had published academic, autobiographical and/or fictional accounts of life during apartheid and/or South African migrations and two others who played a significant role in opposing apartheid. Although their views had an enormous impact on the research, I acknowledge their contribution in the foreword to this dissertation and quote from their publications rather than these interviews. This is because I had asked them to act as consultants to this research and used these interviews to reflect on the ideas that were emerging from the data and scrutinize my dual subjectivity as researcher and white South African migrant. However, as they had all migrated from their country of origin, in addition to speaking at a more abstract level, they used these interviews to reflect on the identity and relational implications of their own experiences. Given their visibility of some within the South African population, using excerpts from this data would have exposed them to possible identification.

### **3.4 Interviews**

Before each interview a telephone conversation was held to discuss: what the research would require of the participants, my intention to tape the interviews, how the data would be used, confidentiality, practicalities such as the place and timing of the meeting, and the fact that my research interest related to a personal as well as professional interest in the impact of migration for self and family.

Each person was sent an information sheet summarizing what had been covered in the call (Appendix 1) and a consent form (Appendix 2). At our initial interview, I repeated the issues covered in the telephone call and information sheet before asking the participants to sign the consent form and starting the interview.

Where possible, participants were interviewed twice. This was partly because one of the people I interviewed during the pilot phase of the research and the first research participant seemed to find the process of reflecting on migration extremely distressing. However, it also allowed me to meet one of the requirements of biographical interpretive narrative methodologies, to allow sufficient space for participants to tell their stories in a relatively uninterrupted way before probing gaps and inconsistencies in narrating (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000; Rosenthal, 1993, 1998).

The first interview was designed to be relatively unstructured in order to facilitate the production of meaning frames. Rosenthal's Gestalt-based methodology involves asking participants one question with the aim of eliciting life story accounts. In contrast, Hollway and Jefferson focus their interviews around a specific theme. Although I asked participants to focus their accounts around a particular question, migration, it fell between these two methods: because in most cases people were discussing events that occurred twenty or thirty years before, it had some parallels with life story accounts. I encouraged the participants to start wherever they wished and said I would listen to their story before asking more particular questions. Where participants asked for guidance on how to start, I suggested they begin with saying when migration took place, what the process was like for them and what influenced their decisions to migrate or remain in South Africa. However, as indicated by Squire (2000), I tried to ensure that the participants did not feel bound to present their stories of self as a coherent narrative.

Other than asking 'can you say more', 'do you remember anything else' and 'can you give an example', probes were kept to a minimum until I thought participants had said what they wanted me to hear. Towards the latter part of the first interview and to a greater extent in the second interview, I asked participants to elaborate on issues that I saw as central to the research but had received little or no attention (Appendix 3.1. and 3.2.). The second interview was different in that I



began by asking what thoughts participants had been left with following the first interview and introduced more probes than in the first.

Because one research question concerned the impact of migration for constructions of self and family, one series of probes focused on the consequences of migration for self and family. This included asking about the relationship between migrants and non-migrants, about their family of origin and family of procreation and the connection between South African migrations and prior legacies of migration. Particular attention was paid to family members who were not included in the spontaneously produced narratives.

The second question concerned apartheid and its dismantling. To interrogate this, probes ranged between more open-ended questions, such as 'are the issues you have raised particular to South Africa?' to mentioning the dismantling of apartheid and/or Mandela's release. I also asked about the choice to move to Britain as a way of exploring the identity claims associated with Britain.

The third question, which relates to memories of cross-racialized experiences of care, was introduced after interviewing the first three participants. To address this, probes ranged between asking participants whether there was anyone else who was central to experiences of family and/or early life that had not been mentioned, to asking about the nanny or nannies who had cared for them. In many cases, it involved asking participants to say more about a nanny who was

mentioned briefly and then dismissed. I ended by asking whether there was anything else participants wished to add, and where time permitted, what advice they would give to other families faced with migration.

The interviewing style involved eliciting concrete stories to anchor accounts, asking open ended rather than closed questions, avoiding 'why' questions and trying to follow up what was said by using the participants' own ordering and phrasing (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, 2000). As suggested by Burck (2005) in discussing her approach to researching bilingualism, my interviewing style was also informed by my experience and training as a systemic psychotherapist. Systemic psychotherapy is predicated on the understanding that asking questions is an 'interventive interaction' because it involves encouraging people to reflect on issues that might have been silenced and on connections between aspects of identity that might have been underplayed. It involves treating what people say as feedback and asking reflexive questions to explore connections and expand the context of what is being addressed (Cecchin, 1987; Tomm, 1987, 1988).

Where possible, the second interview was held two weeks after the first. However, practicalities meant that the initial participant, and one other, could only be seen once. As suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000), that period of time meant that I had sufficient space to reflect on the relationship between the participants and myself and to listen to the tape of the first interview. This

enabled me to consider which gaps in narrating, inconsistencies and contradictions I might want to explore when meeting for the second time. This time frame was designed to be brief enough to enable the participants to use the second interview to reflect on their experience of the first, return to issues they want to articulate differently and create some sense of closure on more unsettling aspects of what had been addressed. In some cases, there was little difference between the stories and emotional tone of the interviews. However, in others the difference was marked. For example, Greg, a non-migrant sibling, used the first interview to problematize the experiences of his emigrant siblings. He 'forgot' about the second meeting, and when I called to rearrange a time he told me he had said all he wanted to say during the first interview. However, having been encouraged to meet again, he used the interview to say more about the challenges his siblings' migration posed for him and how his life might have been different had they been able to share more in one another's lives. He also mentioned some of the challenges he faced as a result of the dismantling of apartheid.

Participants were offered the opportunity to be seen at home, at their work place or at my work place. The combination of a reluctance to be seen at home and limited access to our work settings at certain times meant that I met four of the participants at my home. None of these settings or decisions can be considered 'neutral'. Our opening conversations indicate that meeting at our work settings rendered professional aspects of our identities more visible. Similarly, meeting in

our homes had a different impact on our initial negotiations of power: they positioned one of us as a host and the other as invited guest.

### **3.5 Recording the data**

Each interview was tape recorded and the recordings were listened to at various stages over the course of analysis. All interviews were transcribed. I transcribed the first three but recruited a third party to transcribe the remainder and checked the match between each transcription and tape. The transcripts formed the basis for the research analysis and the method of transcribing was chosen for interpretive reasons. Transcribing conventions were kept as simple as possible:

- As the interviewer, my initials JA mark my questions and other utterances. The pseudonym of the participant is written in full.
- Pauses of less than 10 seconds in length are marked with a dash (as in –). Where the pause is longer, this is marked in italics (*longer pause*). All such timings are approximations.
- Marked changes in volume or speed are noted in italics (*slower*).
- Where one person talks over the other, this is again marked in italics (*talks over*).
- Gross non-verbal communications are also marked in italics (*laughs, cries and bangs on the table*).
- Where there is marked stammering this is recorded by repeating the first letter of the word with a dash (“f-f-family”).

As mentioned earlier, pauses, hesitations, repetitions, significant shifts in pace and volume, and non-verbal aspects of communication like laughter, crying and banging on the table were recorded. They were treated as indications of times when the participants stopped to think more about the account they were providing, and/or of when the unsaid and silenced broke through into what was being said. Since more micro aspects of communication were ignored, it is important to acknowledge that in focusing on aspects I saw as particularly pertinent, I may have excluded others that might have modified my interpretation in some way.

As soon as possible after each interview, a summary of the contents and process of the interview was written. I wrote the summary in the sequence in which I recalled the interchange, rather than trying to construct a more realist ordering of the narrators' account. As technical problems, such as sound interference, occurred at certain points, sections of two interviews were not clear and the summary ensured that what had been shared was not entirely lost. I also used the summary to record my impressions of the interactional process which included reflecting on why I felt more satisfied with certain interviews than others.

In several cases, it was only after the tape recorder was turned off that the participants raised issues that were more troubling - so writing a post-interview summary offered a way of recording these discussions. It is worth noting that in

all these contexts, the interaction between the participant and me became more dialogic over the course of the interviews. This shift raises methodological and theoretical questions about the extent to which my own story might have influenced the narratives that emerged. I return to how I analyzed the interactive nature of the interviews later in the chapter.

After completing the two interviews, a pro forma was compiled, providing standard biographical information that I saw as particularly relevant to the research questions (Appendix 4)

After interviewing, listening repeatedly to tapes, reading the transcripts thoroughly and compiling the summary and pro forma, a pen portrait (Appendix 5) was drawn up according to the guidelines proposed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000, p70). This decision drew on the theoretically informed commitment to treat the two interviews as a whole and avoid the fragmentary consequences of focusing purely on code and retrieval methods. The style of writing was largely descriptive and included references to particular stories and utterances and disjunctions in the narrative. Hence, it provides enough information to enable subsequent readers to assess how I arrived at the ideas I present in this thesis, an issue I return to in discussing questions of reliability and validity.

The pen portraits I compiled drew on understandings that arose from drawing a genogram, or family tree, of each family (Appendix 6). Genograms are a tool that

I, like most systemic psychotherapists, use when formulating a case study: it offers a graphic way of representing individual experience within a three-generational context (Bowen, 1972; Hardy and Laszloffy, 1995; McGoldrick and Gerson, 1985). The genograms were also used as a guide to issues that required further exploration in the second interview, and to subsequent analysis of the way in which portrayals of migrations intersect with prior family patterns. However, adopting an open approach to interviewing meant that the interview followed the participants' pre-occupations and that I did not ask each participant the same questions. As a result, in many cases, there were gaps in the details more usually required in compiling the pro forma and the genogram.

As each of these processes prioritize self reflexivity, the summary, pen portrait and genogram were central to considering how my positioning as a researcher informed the interviewing, recording and interpreting of data. Consequently, they formed the basis for reflecting on how transference and counter transference factors were contributed to impressions recorded in the post-interview summaries and pen portraits, as well as those that became prominent while interpreting the data.

### **3.6 Analysis of the data**

The methodology involved examining how narratives of migrating illuminate the intersection between biography, history and society. The analysis of particular 'small stories' (Georgakopolou, 2006), of the everyday stories that seem to be told in passing, was used to interpret the ways in which research participants negotiated their personal experience in the context of their understanding of what was currently acceptable to say. Because, as Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000) and Rosenthal (1993, 1998) suggest, I was keen to keep the whole in mind, I adopted a case-centred approach to analysis.

The process of analysis involved several readings of interview excerpts as well as whole transcripts. It involved an analysis of the content and process of what was said, which included structural features of discourse as well as the dialogic interactions between the participants and me. It also involved reflecting on what might have informed my own decisions about which segments to prioritize since marking the boundary of a narrative is an interpretive decision in itself.

The amount and complexity of the material acquired over the thirty-five interviews meant that, guided by theoretical considerations, I identified several themes to explore and extracted material from each interview that I saw as relevant to this. Particular attention was paid to the intersections between these themes. Rather



than attempting to uncover processes that might apply across all the data, the analysis was aimed at exploring the multiple ways in which these themes were articulated. The more unusual interviews were used to reflect on and extend understanding of what seemed to be emerging as more 'normative', and to consider why some accounts seemed to become more dominant than others. For example, based on some of the nanny narratives, I had started to view the child as torn between two different sites of identification. On hearing one migrant, Sonja, speak about being abandoned by both mother and nanny, I began to think more about similarities between portrayals of these relationships.

At the same time, I re-listened to the tapes and re-read the summaries, genograms and pen portraits to see how the themes that had been identified in relation to particular participants were reflected across the sample. This led to a focus on the juxtaposition between personal narratives and 'canonical narratives' (Bruner, 1990). This is exemplified in the account of one migrant, Jeannette. Although she described her relationship with her nanny in terms that fit with the forms of psychological care usually associated with parent and child, she downplayed her importance by mentioning her racialized status and role as an employee. Examples like this illustrate how individual narratives were not only positioned in relation to the cultural anomalies posed by cross-racialized child care but by the anomalies of relationships that fell between employment and what is constructed as emotional care.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

The ethical principles guiding this research were informed by the standards set by the British Psychological Society (2006). These standards require researchers to treat participants with integrity and respect and specify the criteria for informed consent, protection from harm and confidentiality. My interpretation of what constitutes ethical practice was also informed by current feminist, social constructionist and psychoanalytic approaches to research. This means viewing research encounters as co-constructed, questions of power as inherent to all research encounters and emphasizing the importance of reflecting on “how we know what we know” (Byrne and Lentin, 2000, p5).

To meet these criteria, in planning and undertaking this research, particular attention was paid to analyzing my own positioning in relation to issues under investigation. This involved analyzing the way in which questions of power and the participants’ and my different ‘realities’ informed the process of research, issues I address in greater detail in the next section. To ensure that participants were informed about the research, I contacted each participant prior to the interviews to explain what the research would entail and how confidentiality would be safeguarded. I also sent them a written information sheet and repeated this information before asking them to sign a consent form and beginning the first interview.

To safeguard confidentiality, participants were given a pseudonym. Ensuring anonymity is complicated when reporting research that is based on a case-centred approach. It is even more so when research involves interviewing more than one family member. Consequently, the commitment to preserving anonymity was prioritized in selecting extracts from the transcripts, providing the biographical details in the tables and in the pen portrait and pro forma appended to the thesis. In some cases this included omitting to mention participants' partnership status.

I deliberately kept the main question I asked open to avoid prescribing what the participants might say. This stemmed from a theoretically-informed interest in analyzing a spontaneous rather than rehearsed form of narrating and desire to respect the integrity of participants' accounts. The data-analytic chapters illustrate that, to some extent, all participants viewed questions about migrations from South Africa as bound up with apartheid. I did not mention that I was particularly interested in the legacies of apartheid in order to explore whether the importance I attach to this was shared by the participants. I do not regard this as deception because had I mentioned apartheid, they might have felt they needed to focus their accounts around apartheid instead of addressing issues that were central to their own experience. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that, in the interests of recruiting data I viewed as particularly pertinent to the research questions, I omitted to share this interest with them.

O'Neill (2000) argues that the requirement of avoiding harm should be extended to ensuring that participants benefit from research. As Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000) suggest, simplistic notions of avoiding harm and informed consent do not fit with the theoretical ideas that underpin in-depth psychological research. For example, given that the analysis is predicated on the understanding that reflecting on the past may evoke feelings that relate to events participants have little awareness of, or have laid aside in getting on with their lives, neither the participants nor I could have anticipated how they would experience this process.

However, my own ambivalence about undertaking the research meant I was aware that the research might evoke memories that were uncomfortable to consider. Several participants said that it had been extremely helpful to reflect on their experiences through these research interviews, echoing proposals that research holds 'transformative' possibilities for researchers as well as participants (Stanley, 1996). Nonetheless, I would not want to gloss over the possibility that participants might have found this process distressing at times. To ameliorate this, I took responsibility for creating a safe context and ensuring that there was time to debrief after the interviews. Holding a second interview was helpful in this respect because it created a context in which we were able to return to issues that had proven distressing. Participants were also told that they could withdraw from the research should they wish to. In the interests of analyzing the 'cartographies of intersection' (Brah, 1996) further, the following

section outlines the approach I adopted to theorizing and analysing my position as a researcher.

### **3.8 Methodological approach to the position of the researcher**

Despite placing primary emphasis on the accounts of the research participants, the methodology was informed by theories that highlight the importance of the relationship between the knower, would-be knower and questions of what is knowable (Byrne and Lentin, 2000; Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Stanley, 1993; 1996). In attempting to render my engagement with the research as visible as possible, the following questions were important:

- What did I notice, and what drew me to noticing these issues?
- How can I know that the interpretation I develop is 'right' or relevant?
- How do I account for silences and disruptions in the text?
- How have the participants' and my subject positions informed the nature of the interview, recording and interpretation of the data?
- What audiences am I trying to address and how does this inform my reading and interpretation of the data?

These questions will be relevant to all forms of qualitative research. However, they are particularly important in this context because in common with the research participants, I have had personal experience of migration and racialized

privilege, and my mother and daughter have all moved country as well. As Byrne and Lentin suggest, in situations where the researcher and researched “share the same platform by being both the knower and the known – researchers are both empowered and dis-empowered by knowing, first hand” (2000, p30) about the experience that is being researched. In this case, I was aware that some of the issues that would be discussed were likely to position both me and the participants in troubled subject positions. Consequently it was particularly important to analyze how the systems of power and inequity to which we were exposed informed the ways we negotiated the space between our positioning as insiders and outsiders. However, I recognize that “we (researchers and researched) are not transparent to ourselves, that our conscious and unconscious mind may well be in conflict, that anxiety and its related defences are part of the human condition” (Hollway, 2006 p545). As researchers can never be fully reflexive, I am likely to have been unaware of some of the ways in which memories, experiences and stories informed my approach to the data.

Nonetheless, these questions helped me to recognize that I was more comfortable with open expressions of sadness than situations in which I felt sadness was being expressed in the form of disdain for others. This alerted me to the risk that I might privilege loss in theorizing the data. Consideration of my countertransference to what was being said helped me to see how some of my own blind spots influenced decisions about pacing the interview, disruptions in the dialogue and whether to ask the participants to reflect on issues they omitted

to discuss. The latter became apparent on reflecting on my initial interchange with Rachael, the migrant who explained that she was “born Indian” and later reclassified white. I still feel embarrassed that I wondered whether her claim to whiteness was ‘valid’ when she opened the door to greet me. My guess is that, based on the stories she told later of how she had been “trained to be white”, Rachael would have been alert to the possibility of my wondering about her racialized status. I mention this unacknowledged and un-languaged interchange because it confronted me, and I assume her, with the legacy of our racialized trainings.

Consequently, the interviews were treated as managed episodes of social interaction, as contested sites of meaning making that are not only politically infused but in constant negotiation in relation to dominant discourses and internalized experiences of self and other (Billig, 1999; Davies and Harré, 1990; Hollway, 2006). It meant that an important aspect of research discussions with supervisors and colleagues involved reflecting on the relationship between my own positioning and my interpretation of the data. Informed by systemic and social constructionist approaches to self reflexivity as well as psychoanalytic ideas of transference and counter transference, I regarded my responses as a reflection of issues that are personal to me and possibly of the emotional concerns of the participants, while recognizing that certain aspects of these encounters are likely to have remained unconscious.

This process involved treating 'mistakes' in interviewing, such as interruptions and leading questions, as potential indicators of the emotional concerns of the participants and myself. It also meant paying particular attention to how I negotiated the border between my position as researcher and confidante and examining interchanges in which I and the participants seemed to be using the interviews to reflect on issues we were unwilling, or felt unable, to address with our own families.

One illustration of how my insider-outsider position seemed to inform the interactions between the participants and me occurred when Isaac, a non-migrant parent who was seen with his wife, presented his views about the link between anti-Semitism and responses to apartheid-based racialized oppression. Although he knew I had lived in South Africa, Isaac started to interpret Afrikaans and Xhosa words that had long been part of local English vernacular. On listening to the tape, I became aware that he started to translate at a point when he was not only reflecting on an issue that placed him, and possibly me, in a troubled subject position but when the atmosphere of the interview had become extremely intimate. Therefore, translation may have been a way of dealing with what had begun to feel like a blurring of boundaries: it positioned me as an outsider to the issues under discussion and kept the interview process at the forefront of everyone's consciousness.



Interrogating my own position also required considering how my experience and training as a psychologist and systemic psychotherapist might have informed research interactions. People spoke with great candour and the interviews included moments of considerable emotional intensity and intimacy. The frequency of hedges, restarts and disruptions in the dialogue suggests that much of what was said was far from well worn. This implies that participants used the interviews to discuss issues they had rarely addressed with others, suggesting that they opened a door to concerns that had been silenced or laid aside in the interests of getting on with life. Knowing my professional background seemed to instil a sense of trust that what was said would be kept confidential. However, this trust may also have led participants to say more than intended and/or confront aspects of their individual and family past that they had not wished to share with others, raising additional ethical questions about how to understand 'informed consent' under such circumstances. Moreover, my clinical training and experience mean that I am used to encouraging people to reflect on issues they find troubling. Consequently, careful negotiation was required to ensure that the relationship remained one of academic endeavour rather than shifting into a psychotherapist-patient interaction.

Listening to the tapes and reading the transcripts I can see that there were moments when I avoided asking for further elaboration for fear of increasing distress. There were times when I found the distress of the participants extremely challenging to bear. I am used to clients crying in clinical sessions, but in that

context expressions of distress emerge from choosing or being referred to address issues that are deeply troubling. However, here any experience or expression of distress would have been evoked in the interests of my research. Whilst my anxieties about the risks of increasing distress may relate to a concern that I might push others to take on issues I find difficult to address, it is possible that it also relates to a desire to protect myself from more unpalatable aspects of migration.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter provided an outline of the three research questions and the methodological approach to analyzing migrant and non-migrants' constructions of the impact of migrations from apartheid-based South Africa on their sense of self, family and positioning within the social systems in which they live. It discussed the rationale for investigating these issues through analyzing the narratives presented by white South Africans who live apart from some of their close family and for using an adapted version of Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000) and Rosenthal's (1993, 1998) biographical interpretive approaches.

The research questions were designed with a view to extending understandings of the intersection between migration, family positioning and the legacy of racialized privilege, and how these aspects of identity intersect with other modalities of identity. The choice of methodology was predicated on the

understanding that narrating is a way of making sense of experiences and memories, and of relating earlier and later versions of the self in relation to the present (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Ricouer, 1984). It drew on the view that, in addressing others through autobiographical accounts, we enter public spheres and situate ourselves in relation to real and/or imagined audiences. This means that, in relating ourselves to others, we engage in constituting and contesting collective as well as individual identities. It does not mean that narrative analysis offers a route to a real or essentialized inner experience, but that this allows the researcher to get a sense of what it feels like to be part of that particular story (Linde, 1993; Reissman, 1993).

Although most of the research data consisted of transcripts of interviews, the chapter discussed the particular significance of analyzing the unsaid and only partly known. In addition to outlining how the methodology allowed for an analysis of the various ways in which language was used in claiming, contesting and refuting certain identity positions, it also discussed the treatment of the more unconscious investments participants have in claiming certain positionings and refuting others could be addressed. Consequently, particular attention was paid to illustrating how social constructionist and psychoanalytic ideas informed decisions about selecting the sample, structuring the interview, recording and analyzing the data, ethical principles and interrogation of my insider-outsider positions as a researcher, migrant, white South African and Jew.

In discussing how the research questions and theoretical frame determined decisions about sample selection, I also outlined the rationale for the treatment of some of the more spurious consequences of sampling. These included the decision to restrict the sample to migrations that took place when the migrant was in their twenties and to recruit a sample that consisted of ten participants who identified themselves as Jewish and ten who did not. This was followed by a detailed description of how the interviews were structured, recorded, transcribed and analyzed and the ethical principles that guide the research.

I ended by discussing the treatment of my own position of a researcher. This is reflected in the following four data-analytic chapters. The first focuses on portrayals of what it meant to be cared for by a white mother and black nanny, the second and third focus on portrayals of migrants and non-migrants respectively, and the fourth on encounters with the next generation and death.

## Chapter 4

### Legacies of the relationship between white mother, black nanny<sup>2</sup> and white child

This chapter explores how legacies of cross-racialized relationships within the home inform constructions of migration by analyzing portrayals of the triadic relationship between a white mother, black nanny and white child. It focuses primarily on white adults' reflections on what it had been like to be cared for by both mother and nanny. However, it also includes an analysis of how one mother reflects on her emigrant son's relationship with the person she employed to care for him, as a way of juxtaposing the different positionings of mother and child. Although I refer to academic publications that focus on the views of nannies, because the research is aimed at exploring how white privilege informed the experiences of migrating for white people, no attempt was made to interview black domestic workers. However, this legacy is likely to have informed black internal and transnational migrations as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the terms domestic worker and nanny are used interchangeably, unless grammatically inappropriate or inaccurate, I tend to use nanny. One reason is that it was used as a coded way of denoting blackness. The other, is that because it is the word more commonly used by white children, it highlights that memories and imaginings of nannies are informed by childhood forms of knowing.

The introduction outlines the rationale for focusing on these triadic relationships and reviews the academic treatment of the dynamics of domestic employment. The chapter moves on to analyze the data, identifying the three themes that underpin accounts of these triadic relationships. It argues that racism interpenetrated family life to such an extent that one cannot make sense of what it means to have left family and apartheid South Africa without taking account of memories of the dynamics between a white mother, black nanny and white child.

The chapter takes as a starting point the notion that adult experiences of separation are developed through early childhood experiences of separating from a highly significant carer and that subsequent separations, like migration, can trigger feelings that relate to these earlier separations (Aktar, 1995; Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975). As under apartheid almost all white children will have been cared for by black nannies, these interpretations of separation suggest that the feelings evoked by migration will relate to separating from nannies as well as parents.

Since the analysis is based on the self accounts of adults, it is important to note that memory is conceptualized as a 'site' that is not only subject to restoration and change, but assumes greater importance when identity is in question (Bal, 1999; Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004; Lambek and Antze, 1996). Although I view memory as influenced by factors that pertain to wider social systems (Halbwachs, 1950), I also view memory as influenced by unconscious processes.

This means that instead of corresponding to the 'real' world in any direct way, what is remembered is understood to be a product of 'screens' that are already impressed by the fantasies and distortions of previous remembering (Freud, 1953). The notion that memory might endure at an unconscious level is backed up by research which shows that, as bodily intimacy begins well before the child has access to language, experiences are encoded in the form of emotional, sensory and visceral memory (Gerhardt, 2004; Siegel, 1999; Stern, 1985). It is also supported by research suggesting that memories of trauma are encoded at a physical level (George, 1996).

The decision to focus on these triadic relationships relates not only to an academic understanding, but to professional and personal experience. Much of my work as a systemic psychotherapist has been with families where one or both parents face a life-limiting physical illness. Consequently, it often involves addressing a mother's concerns about having to rely on others to care for her children (Altschuler and Dale, 1999). However, it was only after interviewing the first three participants that I recognized how central histories of having been cared for by someone who is not a parent are to making sense of experiences of migrating from South Africa.

The first participant interviewed, Charlie, began by talking about "needing" to distance himself from the way in which his family treated domestic workers. The second, Jack, mentioned a friend's theory that "all South Africans are wracked

with ambivalent guilt” about relationships with nannies. However, it was the way Mary described her nanny as the “cornerstone” of her family and then questioned why I was asking what her nanny thought about her decision to leave that drew my attention to the ambiguous way in which memories of cross-racialized care were being portrayed. It was at this point that I began to recognize that these memories seemed to confront both the participants and myself with aspects of the past that are difficult to express.

As with most white South African children of that era, relationships with black women were central to my childhood experience and doxic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991) understanding of care and authority. I took for granted that whiteness signified power and privilege: from a young age I was empowered to sign the Pass Book that allowed ‘my’ adult nanny to walk on the streets at night. It also meant that despite the apparent constancy of our relationship, this woman departed from my life in a sudden and unexpected way, a departure I later learned was based on her decision to resign. As migration has limited my time with my parents to occasional and exceptional circumstances, I am enormously indebted to the black women who supported them through times of illness and increased vulnerability. These insider experiences probably account for my initial embarrassment or perhaps inability to acknowledge what now seems clear, that white South African migration cannot be understood without considering the contested way in which cross-racial emotional attachments infused family life. I



mention this to illustrate how subjective experiences such as these inform the gaze I applied to the context in which I lived and continue to live.

However, this neglect extends beyond my South African positioning as the only attention the earlier international literature granted to the nanny was as an intruder in the home. Consequently, theories of migration have omitted to consider how separating from a paid caregiver might influence constructions of what it means to live apart from close family and remain emotionally connected. This neglect may be accounted for in several ways.

Until recently, most Western psychological theorizing employed a predominantly dyadic framework. One of the assumptions that are central to most psychological theories and approaches to psychotherapy is that the relationships between parents and children have unique symbolic importance for both parties (Bowlby, 1980; Klein, 1975; Minuchin, 1974). Although the infant's experience is dyadic in the early months, focusing exclusively on the dyadic fails to take account of how, in many contexts, childrearing involves a network of care-giving adults and older siblings rather than one single caregiver. Because many of the ideas that continue to dominate current constructions of development were formulated by people who had been cared for by nannies, including Freud and Bowlby, this omission seems to exemplify the taken-for-granted nature of the refusal to 'see' the significance of relationships with nannies (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 1993).

There are indications of a shift towards increased interest in how psychological development is informed by the relationships between the various people in the child's external world. For example, one of the key concepts underlying the main theoretical approach I draw on in my own clinical work, systemic theory, is that dyadic relationships are affected by, and in turn affect, other relationships within a family or household (Bateson, 1979; Gorrell Barnes, 1998; von Bertalanffy, 1968). There are other exceptions. For example, although Bowlby (1980) positioned the mother as the primary attachment figure, the work of other attachment theorists like Schaffer and Emerson (1964) showed that one third of infants were primarily attached to someone else.

However, current psychoanalytically-informed research attests to a shift in focus, to increased interest in how the child 'finds' her or himself through being thought about by both father and mother (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target, 2004). The shift is also exemplified in moves to consider how the processes of identifications are informed by internal and external experiences of relations with siblings as well as parents (Dunn, 1993; Mauthner, 2003; Mitchell, 2003). Nonetheless, with notable exceptions, there has been little consideration of how dyadic relationships and the process of identification are informed by interactions with other household members such as nannies.

In their recent publication, Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) suggest that this neglect is a reflection of the contradictions between accepted canons of mothering and paid help. Canonical narratives define how things 'ought' to be

(Bruner, 1990, 2004). Although nannies are usually hired for their capacity to relate sensitively to vulnerable family members, personal engagement tends to be seen as antithetical to employment. However, as bodily care work is inherently relational, it is likely to be bound up with emotional attachment, affiliation and intimate knowledge. Their work suggests that the combination of racialized discounting, the private 'indoor' nature of the work and a Western culture that prioritizes individualism further militates against acknowledging help and renders the nanny's presence invisible.

Their publications and those of Anderson (2001, 2003), Bujra (2000), Gregson and Lowe (1995), and Lutz (2008) reflect a growing interest in the relational dynamics of domestic employment. This body of work has served to highlight the intersections between class and gender and how a high percentage of domestic employment is based on the migration of women from Third World contexts to do 'women's work' in the First. It suggests that the silence surrounding the relational dynamics of domestic employment reflects an unwillingness to recognize how gender, and in some cases racialization, contribute to maintaining asymmetries in power within the home.

For example, researchers like Parrenas (2001, 2003) have drawn attention to the difficulties faced by children whose parents are forced through economic circumstances to move country to care for others. Others like Hondagnue-Sotelo (2003) focus more on the child the nanny cares for. She positions the nanny as a site of unanticipated and unacknowledged separation and argues that although a

family rhetoric is frequently invoked when referring to a nanny, their family membership is always qualified and balanced towards the advantage of employers. Hondagnue-Sotelo also argues that the intimacy and rivalry that underpin relationships between employers and employees mean that reasons for ending employment are rarely clearly articulated, creating a sense of abandonment for the child regardless of whether it is the employer or employee who terminates the employment. Her analysis fits with Cheever's (2003) finding that domestic employment can create a context in which employer and employee are drawn into a fantasy of friendship that is bound by a highly asymmetrical balance of power. In common with Anderson (2003) and Buijs (1993), she proposes that the isolation nannies face means that their relationship with the children entrusted to their care is likely to be informed by their own need for intimacy as well as the guilt of living apart from their own children.

However, what is different with domestic employment in Britain, Europe and the United States is that during apartheid, domestic employment was a major structure of economic life (Beinart, 2001; Delport, 1992). In almost all cases, the nanny would have been someone who was categorized as a racial inferior: "The institution of domestic service is a microcosm of the exploitation and inequality on which the entire social order was based" (Cock, 1989 p4). The informality of contracts means that no accurate figures exist, but in 1999 the official South African department of Statistics estimated that 800,000 people were employed as domestic workers, accounting for 18% of the total employment. Although domestic work is currently estimated to be the biggest employment sector in

South Africa, with over 1,000,000 people in domestic service, less than four percent are organized into trade unions and domestic service remains the lowest paid sector.

The widespread practice of domestic employment meant therefore that home was a site in which white children encountered the structure of racialized and gendered difference and authority. For the majority, these relationships embodied their most intimate contact with someone categorized as black and informed the positions children took up in relation to gender, class and race (Driver, 1988). This meant that emotional and cognitive development was inseparable from racialization and that white children would have been placed in a position of developing intimacy, loyalty and dependency on people deemed second-class citizens, 'their' nannies (Foster, 1986; Whisson and Weil, 1971).

The physicality of early childhood care means that memories of these relationships would, to some extent, have been written on the body and as such, defied representation. In this context, being cared for by a nanny took place in a context in which physical contact between blacks and whites was curtailed through a law, the Immorality Act (1927). Consequently, one of the risks posed by reflecting on the memories of relationships with nannies may be of re-awakening feelings that pertain to love, desire, distaste, identification and dis-identification with a person who had eventually come to be seen as a racialized Other.

Fictional (Cartwright, 2003; Courtney, 1997; Gien, 2002) and autobiographical (Ames, 2002; Slovo, 1998; Wolpe, 1994) accounts and a satirical comic strip entitled 'Maids and Madams' (Francis, 1999) attest to the contested nature of the emotions evoked by remembering what it was like to be cared for by a white mother and black nanny in a highly racialized society. For example, Courtney begins the novel, 'The Power of One' with a white child by juxtaposing his relationship with mother and nanny: "My life started properly at the age of five when my mother had her nervous breakdown. I was torn from my lovely black nanny with her big white smile and sent to boarding school" (1997, p1). In her play, 'The Syringa Tree', Gien (2002) uses flashbacks to depict a white child's growing realization that 'her' nanny does not belong to her or with her. The adult narrator sees what she could not see before: the black woman's pain in forfeiting her own child to care for her.

However, this area attracted little academic, political or media attention until the last years of apartheid. One of the earliest studies is Cock's (1989) analysis of interviews with white employers and black employees in the Eastern Cape, the area in which I grew up. In a context in which the oral histories of domestic workers were omitted from mainstream (white) consciousness (Romero, 1998), Cock drew attention to the distress black domestic workers experienced as a result of being forced, through financial circumstances, to leave their children to care for others. Another is Mohutsioa-Makhudu's (1989) analysis of the

psychological effects of apartheid on the mental health of black domestic workers.

The transition to democracy led to greater interest in deconstructing the racism, gendered and class-based assumptions that underpin these relationships. Some of this work has focused on the consequences of apartheid-based domestic employment on employees. Examples include Hickson and Strous' (1993) analysis of how an employee's sense of self is affected by disparities between their employer's material resources and her or his own; the verbal and physical violence directed towards black nannies (Matlanyana, 1993); and the consequences of black nannies spending significant amounts of time away from their own children (le Roux, 1999).

Other work has focused more particularly on the position of the child in the nanny's care. Examples include Steyn's (2001) analysis of how the dismantling of apartheid has affected memories of relationships with nannies; Goldman's (2003) analysis of how being cared for by a black woman contributed to the gendering and racialization of white male identities; and the role of the geographic landscape of home in inculcating racism (Ginsburg, 2006). Far less attention has been paid to the relationship between black employees and white employers. However, notable exceptions include the earlier work of Cock (1989), a recent autobiographical account by Ames (2002) and the satires of Francis (1999).

In view of the high percentage of South Africans who have had personal experience as providers, children of providers or recipients of cross-racialized care, the continued neglect of this area is surprising. It implies that black women's role as carers who were both significant and invisible is doxic to apartheid-based experiences of care. However, it may also reflect fears about exposing issues that might be too challenging to address and/or unwillingness to problematize the experience of black mothers who were forced by financial considerations to prioritize the care of others.

As with the international literature, there has been virtually no attempt to consider how the dynamics of domestic employment inform experiences of migrating. In one of the few papers that relate migration to histories of domestic employment, McCabe, Schoenfeld and Schoenfeld (1999) argue that an unrecognized challenge posed by migrating from South Africa is the difference in gendered positions that result from reduced access to easily affordable domestic labour. A second paper raises an issue that is central to this chapter. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Pollock (1994) focuses on her own memories and family photographs in discussing how cross-racialized triadic relationships within the home contributed to a sense of self as abandoned, abandoning and wishing to escape. However, if, as Aktar (1995) argues, adult experiences of separation, including migration, can trigger memories of earlier separations, then the legacy of these relationships is critical to understanding the conscious and unconscious meanings associated with migrations from South Africa.



These issues are discussed in terms of the three main ways in which the triadic relationships between a white mother, black nanny and white child were presented. They include positioning the nanny as a site of racialization, the mother and nanny as competing sites of identification and the nanny as a signifier of loss.

#### **4.1 The institution of 'nanny' as a site of racialization**

The first part of this chapter draws on excerpts that illustrate how white children learned what it meant to be white through observing and contributing to interactions between a white mother and black nanny. As discussed in Chapter 1, Benjamin's (1998) formulation of the development of gendered identification offers a frame for theorizing the development of racialized identities. She proposed that the child's initial identification with a mother is not constrained by knowledge of gender. However, growing awareness of gender means that this changes for boys: separation coincides with coming to terms with the loss of the characteristics that he cannot have or grow into, raising questions of whether he will have to give up everything about his mother that he cherishes in order to grow up like a boy. The male infant may repudiate the mother, rejecting the aspects of her he experiences as unattainable because they appear to be exclusively feminine. Alternatively, he may give up on aspects of her he cannot be and preserve those he can. Repudiation effects a splitting between what is

masculine and feminine and rejection of the feminine, whilst renunciation involves holding on to good and bad parts of both masculine and feminine in the self and other, permitting a more enduring identification with the mother, for boys.

Under apartheid, learning to be white is likely to have parallels with this process. The nanny's extensive provision of childcare meant that relationships with her were an important source of intimacy and identification. However, in view of the racialization that operated both inside and outside the home, separating is likely to have been informed by coming to terms with what appeared to be the limits of identification. On realizing the inferior status of the person with whom they had identified, one option for white children was to repudiate the nanny who represents what is associated with the inferiorized Other. Alternatively, they could relinquish aspects of her they cannot become while preserving others, retaining some of what is both good and bad in themselves and the other. This means that racialization is not only bound up with an embodied sense of intimacy and identity but with loss. Pollock refers to the embodied nature of loss in arguing that her desire was forged through a series of "psychic losses which are always historically textured", losses that were "'territorialized' upon a black woman's nurturing body" (1994, p77).

The concept of repudiation offers a way of interpreting reports of white children kicking, hitting and spitting at nannies. In contrast, renunciation may account for the decision to try to persuade white conscripts to conscientiously object by

displaying posters declaring that firing on township protesters involved shooting the children of their own nannies (Ginsburg, 2006). This does not mean that the white child's separation from the mother did not involve similar processes of repudiation and renunciation. However, the highly racialized nature of the apartheid meant that experiences of separating from a nanny would have been be informed by racialized repudiation and renunciation as well.

To illustrate this, the first section draws on an excerpt that illustrates how Mary (a migrant) positions cross-racialized relationships within the home as the site in which she became aware of the exclusions required to 'become' white. The second illustrates Heather's (a non-migrant sibling) depiction of an attempt to make sense of her mother's attempts to frame racialization as nuanced by issues like social class. The third shows how framing the mother as able to transcend the racialization that dominated the wider society in relating to a domestic worker allows Adam (a migrant) to maintain his identification with her, despite increased awareness of 'race'.

#### **4.1.1 Learning to be white**

Mary moved from South Africa to Britain where her two siblings were living, leaving her parents behind. The following excerpt shows how she draws on a memory of observing her mother's response to people who were deemed

racialized 'others' in reflecting on how she learned the boundaries of racialized inclusion and exclusion.

Near the outset of her initial interview, Mary spontaneously introduced her nanny, Alice, by describing her as the "cornerstone" of her family. However, she seemed to be taken aback when asked what Alice might have thought about her migrating. After a long pause she quietly referred to "white guilt". At that point, the interview was interrupted by a ring on the door bell. After a short break, we resumed and Mary described an event that had occurred when she was "seven or eight". Alice had taken her to a park where she played with a group that included the children of locally employed domestic workers. Alice noticed a stranger watching them and taking particular interest in one child, the coloured child of a domestic worker, and decided to take the whole group to Mary's home for protection. However, a fight soon ensued.

Mary: My mother was - my mother was there and it wasn't clear - what um - you know it wasn't - and my mother - who was kind of edgy and I think I was *aware* that there was something that she wasn't happy with and - she - she she kind of you know so there was this talk about '*Who* did this' and what not and she said 'Oh well, I think you'd better -'. She sent the two - there were two coloured girls and she sent the two coloured girls home and what I was aware that it wasn't - she didn't send home the child who had

caused the injury – she – she she said (quickly) ‘Oh well – I think – I think – I think you’d best stop playing and the two of you had better go home.’ [...] and I I remember working it out then no I my mother’s not a racist.

Mary’s mother is positioned as central to the narrative, reflecting Driver’s assertion that whilst in certain contexts “women act as mediators between the classes: in the colonial context they mediate between the races” (1992, p467). The statement “I think I was aware that there was something that she wasn’t happy with” suggests that the narrative reflects a knowing that pre-dates Mary’s ability to symbolise her understanding through words. It is reminiscent of what Freud called the ‘afterwardsness’ of memory (Laplanche, 1998), of the idea that although certain forms of knowing might not be consciously available when younger, subsequent engagement with certain signifiers can lead to a re-ordering or retranslating of the past. Whilst the narrative portrays Mary’s mother as racist, she asserts she is not. Rather than establishing how the dispute developed, Mary assumed that the racialized “other” was guilty, be this as perpetrator of “damage” or by contributing to an atmosphere in which aggression was more likely to occur. There is no mention of Alice’s role. However, having positioned Alice as a protector outside the home, the omission positions her as powerless to protect the “two coloured girls” within Mary’s home against her mother.

Minh-ha (1994) proposes that in contexts in which identities are particularly contested, they tend to be founded on imaginary trajectories of here and there, of I and not-I. The narrative frames Mary as trying to work out her own position in relation to that of her mother and nanny. At one level, she positions her mother as excluding. The reporting of her mother's voice positions her as excluding. However, the hesitation, repetition, incomplete sentences, repeated references to lack of clarity, as in "it wasn't clear - what um – you know it wasn't," suggest that reflecting on her mother's position as an excluder places Mary in a troubled subject position (Wetherell, 1998). There may be a number of reasons for these signs of discomfort. One possibility is that this memory reminds Mary of the risk of her being sent away too. Another is that it puts Mary in touch with what she had given up on, and possibly betrayed, in order to avoid exclusion.

This notion of an imaginary trajectory between here and there is exemplified in the frequency with which Mary and other participants use metaphors of movement and place to denote exclusion and belonging. The children are first brought home to a place of refuge. However, bringing racialization to the fore removes that place of refuge for the "*coloured girls*", framing Mary's home as a place in which belonging is contingent on the performance of whiteness. This echoes Frankenberg (1993) and Thandeka's (2000) proposals that white racial identities emerge from episodes in which one is confronted with one's primary caretaker excluding another.

Mary grew up in a household with a father as well as a mother. Although she referred to her father's views on apartheid when speaking in an abstract way, in common with others, she focused on the positioning of mother and nanny when reflecting on racialization within the home. This does not mean that her father played no part in this process but that she constructs the interplay between women as the site where she learnt the structure of difference and authority that equipped her to assume a position in relation to gender, class and 'race' in South Africa.

However, this analysis cannot be understood without taking into account my own association with nannies. The narrative was prompted by my asking Mary to say more about a relationship she portrayed as highly significant to her sense of care and family but insignificant to migration. Having reflected on what her mother's response to this fight meant to her, she changed the subject. It was only subsequently that I started to consider how my engagement with nannies might have contributed to my omission to ask her to return to an issue that appears to be of considerable importance to the way in which she sees herself in the present.

#### **4.1.2 Defying attempts to portray racialization as nuanced**

In this section I draw on an excerpt from an interview with Heather, who, unlike two of her three siblings, remained in South Africa. It focuses on her description

of an event that threatened to contravene the rules governing relationships between white and black people within her home.

The narrative is preceded by Heather's statement that her earliest memories of what it meant to 'be white' were of feeling "you were colour-less and you don't really belong". She relates this to living in an area known to be a place in which both white and black people tended to show their identification more openly than in other parts of the country, with the former placing particular emphasis on their colonial roots and the latter wearing traditional tribal dress. On being asked to say more she presented three uninterrupted narratives. The first two positioned black people as sites of intimacy, sexuality, strength and violence. One focused on a growing awareness of her nanny's relationship with a male friend, and a second on associating blood on the pavement with fights between black men. The third story addresses the racialization in her home:

Heather: I can remember my mother invited an Indian woman for tea and there weren't enough cups. I was little. I must have been about four, four or six or something. And my mum said 'get another cup'. And I went in the kitchen and our domestic workers had erm tin mugs - and of course there were china mugs - china cups on the thing - and I stood in the kitchen and I thought for a very long time - and I quite deliberately and defiantly took a tin mug - and I stood at the door - I didn't even go in - and I stood at



the door with a tin mug. And I was - it was like a challenge to my mum. And I was tiny - I don't know how I could have actually (*longer pause*) because I didn't actually do it unconsciously and sort of walk in naively - you know. It was – and - in fact my mother handled it in an incredibly kind of dignified way. She said 'no silly - go and get me a proper cup' or something. You know – erm - she wasn't embarrassed. But I was saying - how do you tell the difference between black people.

Like others in the sample, Heather uses the geographical and national term "Indian" as a binary to whiteness. This indicates that she took for granted that I would realize that an ancestry from some but not all countries denoted non-white status.

The narrative suggests that the contradictions between positionings as guest and black meant that the women employed within Heather's home based the decision of how many cups to set for tea on the guest's classification as non-white rather than granting her honorary white status because she was a guest. Although the only overt reference to black domestic workers is in terms of the mugs that denote inferiority, their action is framed as significant: it led Heather to expose the contradictions inherent in her mother's decision to invite this woman to tea.

As an adult, Heather positions herself as someone who, even as a “tiny” child, was able to recognize the contradictions inherent in the racist status quo. She describes herself as drawing attention to racialization by framing blackness as absolute. The phrase “deliberately and defiantly” constructs her decision to get a tin mug as an act of will rather than coincidence, and as a refutation of her mother’s attempt to present blackness as nuanced by class and social positioning. The phrases “I stood still” and “I didn’t go in” serve as metaphors for holding firm to the racialized rules she had learned. They also suggest that she is on the brink of a different understanding of racialization, and knows that what she is doing is likely to be contested.

Rather than challenging the government’s racialized policies, Heather focuses on her mother’s standards: it is in her mother’s house that crockery denotes racialized status, that tin is for blacks and china for whites. Although she portrays her mother as able to transcend the contradictions between the positioning as guest and black and command her to “get another cup”, the narrative positions her mother as failing to use her authority to transcend racism in dealing with the people she employs.

The pauses that mark this narrative suggest a struggle between identification with a mother and with the unnamed women barred from using “proper cups”. Despite exposing her mother’s dual standards, Heather moves from challenging her mother’s authority to describing her as “dignified”. The shift suggests

ambivalence about the portrayal presented here. Talking about her mother in this way seems to evoke questions about how she might have reacted had she been in her mother's position. Because Heather focuses much of her account on her emigrant siblings and far less on her parents, it is difficult to know whether this challenge is a reflection of other aspects of her relationship with her mother.

Although Heather does not link this story with her position as a non-migrant, the story is told during an interview on migration. At a later stage, she indicates that the relationship she has established with the domestic worker who helps her care for her children is far less exploitative than the relationships she remembers as a child. This suggests that viewing herself as someone who recognized contradictions in the racist status quo when young and has been able to construct less racialized relationships in the present are part of how she understands her decision to stay in South Africa.

#### **4.1.3 Claims to non-racialized relationships**

The notion of a relationship that stands outside the history of racialization is extended in an account in which Adam positions his mother as able to defy the racialized and class prejudice that dominated the behaviour and attitudes of their extended family in relating to a domestic worker, Valerie.

Adam: She (*referring to Valerie*) used to come and visit – quite regularly. [...] The last time she came she said to my mother (*pause*) “I’m really - glad that I’ve seen you – again - you know - I’ll go home and er rest in peace now” and she went off and died a few weeks later. And my mother was - really very upset by that you know. It was - it was a personal friend really that had gone and (*pause*) yeah I know a lot of - er of of South Africans say that you know about their - about their their employees but with her in particular it was real you know.”

The narrative is framed in personal terms: it positions the relationship between Adam’s mother and Valerie as extending beyond the boundaries of employment and racialization. It suggests that he deals with the potential tension between identification with two care-givers by framing his mother, the person deemed racially superior, as working to remediate exploitation by promoting a relationship with Valerie that is based on mutual positive regard and friendship.

However, frequent gaps in dialogue reflect the intrusion of the non-linguistic into what is said. Moreover, repeated claims to authenticity, as in “really glad”, “really very upset” and “it was real”, imply a need to defend what is said. These gaps and references to the ‘real’ suggest that the claim to a deracinated relationship is qualified. Adam does not refer to his own relationship with Valerie. However, the contrast between relationships others have with “employees” and this “personal”

and “particular” relationship suggests that identification with his mother was informed by being able to view her as transcending the racism that dominated the society in which they lived.

Adam contextualizes his comments about a black domestic worker in terms of separation and return, in this case in terms of Valerie’s desire to come “back” to see his mother before returning home to die in peace. His decision to focus on a separation and reunion with Valerie in the context of reflecting on leaving his family suggests that memories of leaving family and country are informed by memories of separating from Valerie. However, his reference to Valerie coming “back” alludes to an issue he does not mention: the Pass Laws which dictated residency rights during apartheid meant that retirement would not only have spelled an end to paid work but an end to Valerie’s right to remain in the area in which she had lived (Bernstein, 1985; Cock, 1989). This suggests that despite constructing this relationship as free from exploitation, retirement was marked by the impossibility of transcending asymmetries in racialized power.

#### **4.2 Mother and nanny as multiple sites of identification**

This section uses extracts from interviews with Jack, Jeannette and Annette to illustrate some of the different ways in which white children negotiated their identification with both mother and nanny.

The first shows how framing his nanny as a site of unconditional regard enables Jack (a migrant) to affirm the strength of their bond but seems to evoke a need to claim identification with his “whole family” as primary. The second depicts the ways in which Jeanette deals with the contrast between a relationship of “incredible ease” with a black nanny and her idealized, emotionally unavailable and racially superior mother. The third extract shows how Annette (a non-migrant mother) moves between repudiating and celebrating the relationship between a domestic worker and her emigrant son.

#### **4.2.1 Claiming family identifications as primary**

Jack, the only member in his family to have left South Africa, begins his first interview by discussing his rationale for migrating before referring spontaneously to a friend’s theory that “all South Africans are wracked with ambivalent guilt” about nannies. His comment positions ambivalent guilt as a collective response to apartheid. However, the exaggerated hand movements that accompany this statement suggest that for Jack too, remembering relationships with nannies continues to evoke considerable emotional intensity. He moves on to mention a “marvellous” nanny but it is only on being asked her name that his tone becomes more personal:

Jack: Eunice - uh - I remember her coming back – toothless - old  
and she looked at me and she said ‘I knew you were going to be a

great man one day' (*laughs*). Now - if your nanny says that to you then it must matter. Of course - there was the - leaving behind my - whole family - parents were alive - sister was alive - brother was alive - what about that?

Heteroglossia is used to position Eunice as an expert witness and a site of what Rogers (1959) calls 'unconditional positive regard'. Drawing on Eunice's prediction that he would become a "great man" allows Jack to claim success without appearing to be boasting. Although laughter and the descriptor "toothless - old" imply a downplaying of what she meant to him and her social status, the narrative reflects a sense of mutual warmth and delight in the wisdom of an elder. He does not explain what is meant by "a great man" but the suggestion is that this aspiration was bound up with his decision to leave.

Like Adam, Jack contextualizes his recollections of a relationship with a nanny in terms of separation and return. His reference to Eunice "coming back" alludes to the difference between identifications that are informed by the time-limited nature of employment and the constancy of family. This indicates that, despite such relationship appearing to terminate with the end of employment, these relationships were not simply forgotten but were integral to understandings of self and family.

The narrative suggests that moving from seeing himself as the object of Eunice's gaze to a 'reciprocal gaze' (Rivas, 2003) enables the adult Jack to recognize her vulnerability, reconnecting him with the memory of their earlier mutual attachment. At this point, he moves on to affirm the relationship with his "whole family", suggesting that re-connecting with memories of their closeness evokes a need to renounce this aspect of their relationship and affirm a primary connection to family. The absence of any pause between recounting her prediction and a rhetorical question about the meaning of leaving parents and siblings constructs a parallel between leaving, or even abandoning, both family and Eunice.

Despite presenting a story in the form of a well-worn anecdote, pauses and hesitation hint at a troubled subject position. It suggests that remembering his relationship with Eunice is accompanied by a remembering of the cultural anomalies between accepting her personhood and positioning her as racialized Other. It seems to re-connect Jack with a loss that pre-dates migration and disconnection from one of the people with whom he had been most intimate.

#### **4.2.2 The nanny as a foil to exclusion by the mother**

The following narrative illustrates suggests that identifying with a nanny may represent protection against feeling excluded or abandoned by a mother. Jeannette begins her account by talking about the "trauma" of separating from her family, particularly her mother, as well as her country. On being asked



whether migration involved leaving anyone else special to her, she smiles and introduces her nanny, Elsie.

Jeanette: "There was that - you know - incredible ease - that you have could have when you could just say anything – and - a homeliness (*hesitantly*). No we had a – a cook called Elsie who was my nanny - nurse when I was a baby - and she was with us always. But and she was very quiet and er - almost very unlike the usual Cape Coloured - I mean she was very reserved - but also I was very at home with her – erm - but it was very *domestic* - that relationship."

The language and pace of the narrative reflects a move between positions that are comfortable and more troubling. In describing her relationship with Elsie as one of "incredible ease", Jeannette evokes the unconditional acceptance associated with idealized parenting. Signifiers of place and emphasis are used to frame Elsie as a site of intimacy and belonging, as in "homeliness" and "domestic". The pronoun "you" shifts what is said to a generality, suggesting this "incredible ease" with a nanny would be known to all, including myself.

The pattern of narrating then changes: Jeannette hesitates, pauses and says "no" before moving from the discourse of a personal relationship to that of employment. Although the tone remains intimate, Elsie is re-defined in terms of

her role as “cook,” “nanny” and “nurse”, with “we had” suggesting ownership.

Placing her most dependent stage last suggests a desire for distance from a time of greatest vulnerability. However, it also suggests that, at some level, memories of the physicality of early childhood care remain closest or most important to her.

Deracializing Elsie seems to allow Jeanette to take pleasure in their relationship.

Elsie is given honorary white status and defined as unlike other “Cape Coloureds”. In returning to Elsie, although Jeannette does not refer to racialization, it underpins the contrast she constructs between Elsie and her mother.

Jeanette: She was much more (*long pause*) - my mother was - ill - when I was a child she was - ill - and you couldn't disturb her too much. She was extremely - interesting - I mean she was just - erm - she was on another plane. Erm - I really quite enjoyed the domestic characters - as a kind of counter poise. So my - Elsie was the cook and I'd sit up at night - you know - watching her bake cakes and things - being just with her with the knitting needles going and - with her friend Lorrie - sitting in the kitchen with her knitting needles - and I loved that domestic life.

As before, signifiers of place construct Elsie as a site of belonging, conveying the constancy of idealized family relatedness: with Elsie, Jeanette is “at home”, “she

was always with us.” However, there are indications of a tension between the desire to narrate and censor, suggesting ambivalence about the portrayal she presents. Jeannette begins by describing her mother as “much more” but does not complete her sentence. Instead, she pauses and frames her mother as unavailable. Although she offers a reason for this, illness, she uses language that is more usually suggestive of a relationship with a stranger, “extremely - interesting” and positions her mother as operating “on a different plane”. Jeannette returns to focus on Elsie. She continues by mentioning her role as an employee again but the description of watching her bake and “just being with her” denotes a sense of mutual warmth, attachment, nostalgia and/or regret.

The intensity of the narrative and gaps in discourse indicate that re-remembering her identifications with both women places Jeannette in a troubled subject position. It suggests a desire to be with her mother but seeing her as less available. It also suggests that ongoing contact with Elsie, the alternative and more present mothering figure, meant that she provided a foil to Jeannette’s unrequited desire for her powerful yet relatively unattainable mother.

Although there is no reference to her mother’s status as white, Jeannette’s earlier comment about Elsie being “very unlike the usual Cape Coloured” indicates that negotiating her identifications with these two women was complicated by an awareness of Elsie’s positioning as racially inferior. The contrast between “couldn’t disturb” and “at ease” suggests that, through Elsie, blackness came to

embody an idealized emotionally available Other that was markedly different from the emotionally unattainable whiteness embodied by her mother. It also indicates that what Jeannette stood to lose in identifying with her mother and 'becoming' white was the taken for granted ease and warmth that blackness had come to signify. This means that becoming white is likely to have introduced fractured versions of self, of a self who was prepared to distance herself from someone to whom she "could say anything".

This sense of being caught between irreconcilable polarities is evident elsewhere in Jeannette's account. She positions herself as torn between her emotions and intellect in discussing how she has dealt with the consequences of migrating. Although she indicates that her decision to distance herself from a "reprehensible regime" was valid, she suggests that it would have been better for her children to have had more access to their grandparents, extended family members and other people who had a sense of her family's history. This sense of split is also evident in the way she contrasts her attachment to people and places, as in "I was so *touched* by the landscape – not so much by the people – but by the feeling of the mountains and the sea". She follows this by saying it is "disgraceful" that she does not feel "I *never* want to see South Africa again". Although she does not say why this is "disgraceful", the parallel between these polarities and contrast between her relationship with her mother and nanny suggest that what is "disgraceful" is not only an inability to deny the wish to see

South Africa again but the desire for the people, relationships and places that signify apartheid.

Consequently, her narrative accords with the proposal that colonial systems have the potential to create schisms in the psyches of white people which allow for moments of intimacy between white parents, black nannies and white children and enable people to express a love of the earth and sky of Africa but not its people (Memmi, 1990; Steyn, 2001). In this case, the attachment to the “mountains and the sea” seems to represent the desire for a deracinated and less contested identification. However, the descriptions of feeling torn between her white mother and black nanny suggest that the environment does not only signify a less contested site of identification: it represents the site in which she learnt what it meant to abandon and be abandoned.

#### **4.2.3 Repudiating the intimacy between child and domestic worker**

This next section draws on an excerpt in which Annette depicts her emigrant son Tom's childhood relationship with Nathan, a man she employed to help her care for the children and home. It follows on from a brief and hesitant reference to Tom's military service in which Annette says that even though her son has said little to her, she feels the experience was deeply troubling and contributed to his decision to migrate. She adds that this view has been strengthened by reading a

fictional account of how military conscripts were forced to participate in actions they later found shameful.

Annette: My son is not a *(pause)* he hasn't *strong* convictions.

He's not that sort of person. I mean - we had an – old - I won't call him a houseboy because that's 'not in' anymore but he was - to him he was *(laughs)* – Nathan - he was old and he *loved* Tom and Nathan *loved* him - and eh *(pause)* he was really part of our family.

The narrative moves between celebrating and repudiating the relationship between Tom and Nathan. Annette's repeated use of the negative and starting to say "he was" before talking about her use of language implies uncertainty about how to define their relationship. The phrase "he was really part of our family" positions Nathan as 'fictive kin' (Cheever, 2003) implying that their relationship transcends the boundaries of paid carer and charge. However, the qualifier "really" contests this claim. Similarly, although "our" denotes a shared connection, it hints at possession, positioning Annette's role as employer as central to the relationship between Nathan and Tom. This contestation suggests that, even though Nathan might have been employed on the basis of his capacity to relate sensitively to children, the intimacy of their relationship poses a threat to the primacy of the mother-child dyad.

Although there is no overt reference to racialization, it is implicated in repudiating the intimacy between Tom and Nathan. For example, despite mentioning Nathan's love for her son twice, Annette defines him as a "houseboy". Her language shows how under apartheid, racial categories did not have to be mentioned as the infantilizing terms 'boys', 'girls' and roles in servicing whites signified blackness. It also shows how describing people in terms of their service roles militated against identifying with and acknowledging dependency on those deemed Other.

The comment "not in anymore" frames language use as dictated by fashion rather than political ethics, indicating a public rather than private redefinition of meaning. This framing enables Annette to use the infantilizing "houseboy" while distancing herself from a position as oppressive. It suggests that Annette knows what current language use should be, but makes clear that she disagrees with it. It represents a form of prolepsis in that her knowledge defends against correction and charges of not knowing. Consequently, the narrative accords with suggestions that in the post-apartheid era, sentiments that were previously seen as acceptable may be censored even if people have not changed their views (Billig, 1999).

The narrative also reflects the fact that, just as in the post-apartheid era expressions of racism are taboo, under apartheid a white person's acknowledgement of love for a black person transgressed canonical norms

(Steyn, 2001). It was presented after an allusion to the possibility that Annete's son's military service might have involved actions he felt uncomfortable with later. The timing of this narrative suggests a desire to replace the image of Tom as potentially shameful with one where he is seen as loveable in the eyes of a person who symbolizes those he might have harmed. The assertion "he hasn't got strong convictions" suggests that any action he might have undertaken would not have been grounded in racism. In so doing, it fits with Arendt's (1977) analysis of the 'banality of evil', of how people failed to take personal responsibility for the actions done under the Nazi regime. It also serves to downplay the intensity of Tom's feelings towards Nathan.

Men were rarely employed to care for children. However, Annette's narratives reflect a number of themes that dominate the few publications devoted to analyzing employers' understanding of their relationship with black employees (Ames, 2002; Cock, 1989). It illustrates the rivalry that often informed employers' relationship with domestic workers and the tendency for employers to assume that the relationship was mutually satisfying even though employees were treated as children and as a necessary evil to ensure that the home and children were cared for. Like Annette, a post-apartheid autobiographical account of her relationship with Rosalind, the woman she employed to care for her children, Ames describes the envy and sense of exclusion she felt on seeing the intimacy between Rosalind and her children. Looking back Ames says that her desire to frame her relationship with her children as primary meant that she failed to



recognize Rosalind as a person in her own right. She quotes Rosalind as questioning how other white employers, not herself, could entrust black nannies with partial responsibility for the inculcation of white culture but behave “as if they thought we lived like animals” (Ames, 2002, p25). Rosalind’s reported words suggests that instead of the silence of domestic workers reflecting an absence of voice, it may have been one of the few ways black people could resist or tolerate the oppressive context in which they were forced to live.

#### **4.3 The nanny as a signifier of loss**

This section focuses on narratives that position the nanny as a signifier of loss. It develops a theme raised earlier in this chapter: the frequency with which references to a nanny were contextualized in terms of a separation from, and desire for reunion, suggests a conflation between feelings of separating from family and from a highly significant carer who came to be seen as black.

I examine this further by analyzing a narrative which shows how Martin (a migrant) projects his feelings about having been relatively abandoned by his parents towards his nanny and discussing how Sonja (another migrant) portrays herself as excluded by the partnership of both mother and “servant”.

#### 4.3.1 The nanny as abandoning

This narrative illustrates how feelings that relate to parents' absence may be projected on to a nanny. Martin describes his relationship with his family of origin as complex and positions himself primarily in relation to his father, an anti-apartheid activist. Although the relationship with each of his parents is portrayed as very different, what is common is that he sees them as so caught up with their own struggles to survive that they were unavailable to him. The emphasis he places on managing without their support dominates much of what he says. Nonetheless, a brief narrative towards the end of his first interview alludes to loss and locates this loss in terms of his relationships with women: instead of framing his father as unable to meet his childhood needs, it focuses on his mother and his nannies.

Martin: I – I - I've always been left to my own devices – my - my mother worked in twenty-four hour stretches um – so I had several mothers – in Zulu slaves – I wasn't really like – like - um – in the normal brackets so that Primrose was one of the family – the slave was part of our family – un and um – I knew about her son and about her place in Zululand – and I made my own bed um and um.

This short narrative condenses a great deal about the family situation and the socio-political circumstances in which white South Africans lived. It indicates that Martin's memories of a relationship with his nanny are informed by his sense of having been relatively abandoned by both his father and mother. His mother is framed as abandoning: it was she who "always" prioritized her work outside of home over looking after him. She is also positioned as responsible for leaving him with a person, or people, whose care was experienced as insufficient, as being "left to my own devices".

Since the experience of being left alone refers to being cared for by one or more black women, by "several mothers", "Zulu slaves" or Primrose in particular, Martin frames the care these women were able to provide as insufficient. However, as this claim is juxtaposed by comments about his parents' unavailability, it suggests a projection of what is negative onto the racialized Others who cared for him in his parents' absence.

The narrative positions Martin as aware of asymmetries in power. The words "Zulu slave" undercut what is said. They problematize the idea that nannies could be seen as property at the same time as making it clear that they were treated as devalued property. The statement "I made my own bed" suggests a commitment to minimize his positioning as oppressive and extends their relationship beyond the bounds of an employee and her charge.

In common with other participants, Martin gives no indication of whether Primrose's care for him might have been informed by feelings towards her own children. This omission may reflect her ability to hide such feelings. Alternatively, it may reflect a reluctance to confront what was unpalatable, that their relationship was only possible because she decided to leave her children to care for him. At a later point, Martin mentions Primrose's son and her "place" in Zululand. These comments imply an awareness of how, regardless of attempts to minimize the oppressive nature of their relationship, Primrose could never belong with or to him because she belonged with the person who represents his black 'sibling'.

#### **4.3.2 Mother and nanny as excluding**

The following narrative illustrates how portrayals of the relationship with a mother and nanny intersect with particular family dynamics. Sonja frames migration as having had a damaging impact on both herself and her children. One reason is that, unlike many other white South African emigrants, she did not choose to leave. Her ability to obtain a British passport meant that she felt obliged to leave "a life that made sense to me" so that her husband could escape military service. Another reason is that her parents' inability to deal with their own traumatic experiences of separation damaged their ability to care for her, affecting responses to subsequent loss as an adult.

Sonja alludes to the legacy of unresolved loss throughout her account. For example, on hearing her refer to an attempt to reconnect with her family, I asked her to say more about reconnecting. She pauses before saying “well – that implies connection”, an ironic response that seems designed to mediate the feelings evoked by reflecting on the possibility of such a reconnection. She follows this with yet another pause. Faced with what I assumed was a reluctance to say more, I asked whether migrating meant leaving anyone else important to her. She again differentiates herself from other white South African emigrants by asserting that unlike others, her memories of “our servants” were not “romantically idealized”. Mentioning servants in this way suggests a social collocation, that it is canonical to romanticize the black-white relationship now. She continues by saying:

Sonja: But I have memories of a partnership between a servant and my mother – erm – about keeping the house clean and the children – sorted out [...] I have no doubts about the ways our servants saw us kids – and erm – there were the names I remember in in Xhosa are “*pooma - pagama (get out) - hamba suga wena (go away)*).

The narrative depicts an unambiguous and well-worn story in which Sonja presents her memory of having been excluded by both mother and nanny. There is no suggestion of a relationship that is personal. The one relational connection

she mentions is of a partnership of two excluding figures. The servants are only presented in employment terms, as in “servant” and “our servants”. This serves to define these relationships in terms of an economic contract in which an unnamed woman or women had the role of “keeping the house clean and the children – sorted out”. The extreme case formulation, “I have no doubt,” positions her construction of these relationships as uncontested.

Sonja uses Xhosa to emphasise her point and show that she knows what she is talking about. However, instead of using “*pooma – pagama - hamba suga wena*” to denote being pushed away, she describes these words as “names”. This suggests a personal relationship, or a desire for more of a relationship, with someone who signified banishment. Although her use of “our” positions servants as chattels, it denotes a personal connection as well. Despite references to certainty, Sonja’s narrative is replete with hesitations and contradictory heteroglossia. The increase in volume when using Xhosa to denote exclusion suggests that the construction of impersonality is aimed at protecting her from troubled emotions evoked by feeling excluded.

This narrative illustrates Sonja’s understanding of the contractual nature of her relationship with a servant. However, as with Martin’s narrative, non-discursive markers suggest that, despite presenting this view, reflecting on memories of her relationships with a mother and nanny places her in a troubled subject position.

Transference and countertransference factors may account for the discomfort I felt in listening to Sonja. It is possible that my sense of discomfort emerged from hearing a story that reflected pain but where instead of the narrator acknowledging this, she projected her pain onto me. However, my discomfort may reflection of my own countertransference because her account forced me to confront issues I have been unwilling to consider.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

As indicated earlier, Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) propose that, in contexts of migration, family memories are integral to how individuals create a sense of continuity between their past and present lives. However, this chapter indicates that for white South Africans this is more complicated. As I have written elsewhere, family memories appear to be bound up with memories of what it meant to identify and dis-identify with people who were deemed racially inferior (Altschuler, 2005, 2006). Although the participants tended to mention nannies in a relatively cursory when presenting their accounts spontaneously, the frequency with which they were mentioned suggests that they are significant to their constructions of migration and the ways in which white South Africans and their family have made sense of their positions in relation to apartheid.

Some of the findings discussed here reflect themes that have been emerged in the growing literature devoted to domestic employment. Firstly, in common with

the publications of researchers like Anderson (2001, 2003), Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) and Lutz (2008), the analysis supports proposals that relationships between a mother, a nanny and a child are informed by the cultural anomalies of relationships that fall between employment and emotionally based care. This was reflected in an excerpt that showed how Annette (a non-migrant mother) downplayed the emotional connection between her son and the man she employed to care for him, as if to position the mother-child dyad as primary.

Secondly, a sense of loss seemed to infuse many references to relationships with a nanny. Many referred to a separation in describing the relationship with a nanny or another domestic worker, as if constructing difference between the constancy of family and the time-limited nature of relationships with nannies. However, references to a separation were often accompanied by descriptions of a real or imagined reunion. This suggests that, even though these relationships might have been viewed as time limited, nannies were not simply forgotten but integral to understandings of what it meant to be a family. Other narratives portrayed these relationships as signifying loss: Martin's account illustrates how being left in the care of a nanny when parents are absent can result in the feelings evoked by being left by parents being projected onto the nanny.

Associations with loss are particularly significant to understanding migration. As discussed in Chapter 2, Aktar (1995) proposes that migration has the potential to trigger far earlier memories of separation. Although the nanny was often



mentioned fleeting, she was introduced in the context of discussing migration and presented as a site of loss. This suggests that for these participants, migration and/or reflecting on the memory of migration is likely to be infused with memories of how the mother, nanny and child dealt with a situation in which the child had access to more than one highly significant carer, one of whom was a paid employee and the other family.

In analyzing of the racialization of white identities in the United States, Frankenberg (1993) and Thandeka argue that white children who are cared for by a white mother and black nanny learn to become white through their engagement in these relationships. Thandeka proposes that shame is a central dimension of the construction and negotiation of whiteness and that whiteness is a defence mechanism created to avoid rejection from a community of caregivers and peers.

Their work is particularly relevant to apartheid-based South Africa where these relationships served as racialized 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1994, p4), situations in which people who represented disparate cultures and racialized identities met, engaged and clashed with one another. Consequently, for these children, psychological and social development was inextricably linked with becoming white. This is reflected in Mary's portrayal of her growing realization of the differences between her mother and her nanny. Her description of her mother sending away the coloured children whom her nanny had brought to the house

for protection positioned her relationship with a white mother and black nanny as a key site in which white children learned to 'perform' (Butler, 1990) whiteness. The hesitancy and ambivalence that surrounds much of what she and others said about nannies suggests that migration and reflecting on migration triggered memories of fear about the risks of racialized rejection, as well as shame. However, the diversity of participants' accounts attest to the importance of recognizing that responses to cultural and/or racialized anomalies are informed by multiple factors, including the intersection between cultural forces and family dynamics.

The chapter illustrated the value of applying Benjamin's (1990, 1998) formulation of the gendering of identities to theorizing the relationships between a white mother, black nanny and white child during apartheid. As discussed earlier, she suggests that growing awareness of gender means that, in order to become a boy, the young child may repudiate the mother, rejecting aspects he might have cherished before because they are seen to be feminine. Alternatively, he may adopt a strategy of renunciation, of giving up on aspects he cannot become and preserving those he can, thus permitting a more enduring identification with her.

The concept of repudiation offers a way of understanding the narratives which suggested a discounting of the significance of the nanny's personhood, for example where instead of referring to any one person, participants used the unnamed 'mark of the plural' (Memmi, 1990), as in "servants" or "nannies", to

denote their presence. However, narratives which celebrated the nanny are more reminiscent of renunciation: even though they portrayed her as a racialized other, she was positioned as significant to the constructions of self. Moreover, as reflected in Benjamin interpretation of the gendering of identities, the heteroglossic nature of descriptions of these relationships reflects an oscillation between these two processes.

The thesis does not treat gender as a central frame. However, this chapter indicates that, as women tend to play a primary role in the care of young children, constructions of these relationships were not only racialized but gendered. Although many participants referred to their father's views on apartheid when discussing events outside of the home, both men and women presented the values of apartheid as having been transmitted through the relationship between women when discussing events at home. In addition, women's constructions of these relationships seemed to be more contested than those presented by the men. However, exceptions to this highlight the need to consider how these portrayals intersected with other identity claims.

Many of the memories discussed in this chapter were presented in the form of well-worn anecdotes. However, the emotionally-laden terms used to describe these relationships and non-discursive markers, like hesitancies, gaps in narrating, gesture and laughter, indicate the intrusion of the un-said into what was said. Reflecting on relationships with a nanny seems to involve a

destabilizing and disturbing encounter with aspects of the past that defy representation. This meant that, as adults, recollecting how they and their family were positioned in relation to a nanny involved an encounter with the known, partly known and unknown.

Caring for an infant or young child is not only a psychological process. It involves close physical contact and takes place at a time when thoughts and feelings cannot be symbolized through language. Consequently, aspects of these encounters are likely to have remained unconscious or only partly known. Several other factors may contribute to the extent to which these relationships might have remained less conscious. During apartheid, these relationships took place in a society in which there was a law curtailing the level of physical contact between white and black people. However, the dismantling of apartheid has meant that memories of home are likely to have become populated with what was previously unnamed, with what Freud (1919) might call the 'unheimlich'. The notion of the unheimlich is likely to be particularly relevant because, roughly translated, the unheimlich means 'uncanny' and 'heim' means home. Even more pertinent is that Freud's concept of the unheimlich nature of home does not derive its terror from the externally alien but from the strangely familiar from which one cannot separate.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Migrants' Narratives**

This chapter analyses how eleven white South Africans, six women and five men, who migrated from South Africa during the apartheid era, reflect on the impact of migration on experiences of self, families and positionings in society. Particular attention is paid to real and imagined encounters with non-migrants, including parents and siblings; to how constructions of migration intersect with positions in the life course; and to how these encounters are informed by the socio-political context of the country in which migrants and their families had lived. Consequently, this chapter is more concerned with leaving and living outside of South Africa than life in Britain.

The decision to structure the analysis of migrants' accounts in this way is partly based on an academic interest in addressing gaps in research and theorizing. It also draws on a personal desire to understand how apartheid and our histories of white privilege have informed the ways in which I and my family make sense of being a family that spans different geographic boundaries and nationalities, and how our views have changed as we have become older.

This chapter is divided into three parts, each of which focuses on one of the main strategies migrant participants use in constructing their accounts. They include

framing migration as: (i) a site of enduring loss and alienation, (ii) as an opportunity to construct a more comfortable position in relation to their family and/or the socio-political context and (iii) as introducing levels of disruption that have been relatively easy to transcend.

## **5.1 Narratives of loss**

This first section reflects a theme that dominates current understandings of migration, namely that regardless of whether migration is chosen or forced it has at least some problematic implications for the lives of migrants and/or their non-migrant family (Falicov, 1998).

Narratives selected from interviews with Jack, Melanie and Sonja and references to the accounts of Martin, Steven and Charlie are used to analyze the identity and agency claims that underpin prioritizing loss and downplaying gain. In interrogating the extent to which participants prioritize either aspect of the loss-gain continuum, I do not mean to suggest that I view this process as necessarily conscious or do not recognize the difficulties imposed by reduced access to the places and people with whom had been identified before migrating. Instead, my intention is to explore the identity and relational consequences of their portrayals and how they influence the ways in which migrants and their non-migrant kin have made sense of their different positions.

One of the issues underpinning much of what was said relates to the tensions between the desires to hold on to and let go of the past. Drawing on Portelli's (1990, 2002) notion of the 'uchronic', the tendency to hold on to how life might have been different had history taken a different course, I illustrate how positioning past identities as more authentic than the new can protect migrants from confronting what might otherwise be experienced as unpalatable. Some of what may be unpalatable may relate to feelings positioned as an outsider in the country to which one has chosen to move, as reflected in Kristeva's (1982) analysis of the position of the stranger. Other factors appear to include disparities between the positions of the migrants and non-migrants' access to professional, financial and social opportunities. However, the unpalatable also seems to relate to the politicized or even moral meanings assigned to migratory choices and how white South Africans are viewed in Britain.

#### **5.1.1 Loss as the experience of another**

Jack is older than the rest of the sample (80). Although he left in his early twenties, he left less than ten years after the Nationalist party, the party responsible for introducing apartheid, came to power. As with all first interviews, I begin by asking how migration has informed his life and the lives of members of his family. Jack responds by accounting for his decision to migrate: it offered access to a better professional career and it was the course of action the woman he wanted to marry wished to take. He uses emphasis in noting that, although he

was aware "*the world had changed*" after the Nationalists came to power, he would have been prepared to "adapt" to the altered situation. Jack's use of emphasis highlights the importance he accorded to this change, positioning him as politically aware. He went on to say that he was able to leave because being in the army during the Second World War taught him he could "actually leave – er family and country and survive".

The reference to his wife's view accords with Bauer and Thompson's (2004) proposal that it is not only men but women who determine the migratory decisions of intact couple-headed families. Although it reflects a celebration of her stance, the emphasis he later places on problematic compromises in caring for his elderly non-migrant parents suggests that framing her as the driving force helps to deal with the troubled subject position of adopting a course that was problematic for others.

Jack continues by focusing on apartheid, and discussing the legacy of cross-racialized relationships within the home. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is after talking about his nanny that he re-introduces his non-migrant family, as if to frame his identification with family as primary. On being asked to say more about his family, he poses a rhetorical question about whether his father's health deteriorated more rapidly because he had left. Rather than saying more about his father, he shifted to his mother, a move that may indicate an unwillingness to



reflect more about his father or that separation and/or migration are more central to memories of his mother:

Jack: Yes - it-it-it- was - it was it was hard - I mean uh-uh - my mother used to said to me 'You will come back - won't you?' and I said 'Yes - I will come back'. Uh - but once I got on the plane I thought to myself - I wonder - and I didn't. I was there when she died - at her bedside - err and that was terrible - *absolutely terrible* 'cause she - had cancer and she was in extraordinary pain and she said to me 'Can't you *do* something for me?' and I said - 'I'm not your doctor' and she said - 'But you are my *son* and you *are* a doctor - can't you do something for me?'

Jack begins by referring to his own position with the impersonal "it" before focusing on the difficulties his mother faced. The hesitancy of his start and use of simple language, as in "it-it-it- was - it was it was hard", suggest embarrassment about discussing his struggles in the context of her greater suffering. It is also possible that problematizing his mother's experience is a way of masking his loss and aspects of migration he finds unpalatable: although migration offered him access to other professional and social opportunities, it compromised the care he was able to offer his mother.

Jack uses his mother's reported voice in discussing his inability to provide her with the support and reassurance she wanted. He emphasizes this by mentioning his positions as a son and doctor. Using her voice to ask questions like "can't you *do* something for me?" and "you will come back - won't you?" suggests a reticence about exposing his own memory of this event to research scrutiny. The hesitancy and changes in volume evident in narrating indicate that the 'deep traces' (Bakhtin, 1981) of these questions continue to place the older Jack in a troubled subject position.

The response, "yes – I will come back", positions Jack as trying to protect both of them from acknowledging how much migration had interfered with their anticipated relationship. Phrases like "I thought to myself" and "I wonder" indicate a contesting of his intention to return. He positions the literal journey between continents, on a plane, as an interstitial space in which to reflect on the emotional journeys he and his non-migrant parents were forced to take as a result of the decision to migrate. The decision to tell this story indicates a desire for this aspect of migration to be recognized, to position compromises to adult children's ability to care for elderly parents as part of a collective process that relates to others. What his account also suggests is that compounding the difficulties in dealing with the contradictions to his anticipated role as a son is that it was his own action that led to these compromises in care.

In problematizing migration, Jack focuses primarily on relationships with his parents. However, briefer references to his non-migrant siblings suggest that reflecting in greater detail about these relationships might have introduced issues he was less willing to discuss. For example, he refers in passing to supporting one of his siblings financially and describes visits to see her as a form of “penance” for the decision to leave. In addition, brief references to the positive opportunities of living in post-apartheid South Africa suggest that saying less about his siblings may also be a way of defending against considering how his life might have been different had he decided to stay.

Subsequent stories about life in Britain indicate that, despite professional success and the establishment of a social circle in which he feels valued, the problematics of migrant insider-outsider positionings continue to inform Jack’s sense of self. He uses humour in describing actions that reflect the ‘performative’ (Butler, 1990) nature of identities: soon after arriving in Britain he joined various establishment social and professional societies in an attempt to ‘become’ British. Migrants often adopt such strategies to deal with the dissonance between how they see themselves and feel constituted by others (Alvarez, 1999). It decreases the risk of being associated with what is deemed inappropriate. However, although this strategy might be aimed at increasing relational connection in an unfamiliar context, it can decrease connection as it relies on censoring aspects that are likely to have been central to past constructions of identity.

The complexities of negotiating insider-outsider positions are also evident in Jack's references to his position as a Jew. He draws on family and Jewish histories of displacement in portraying migration as integral to his understanding of family. However, he also uses 'Jewish' and 'South African' interchangeably in discussing his desire to distance himself from the familiar, suggesting both aspects of identity are associated with racially oppressive positions.

Dilemmas about balancing one's own life as an adult with caring for others are not particular to migration, as evident in Mooney and Statham's (2002) analysis of the experience of what they call the 'pivot generation'. However, in common with many other participants, Jack portrays geographic distance as exacerbating adult children's difficulties in balancing their own lives with caring for elderly parents.

Martin and Steven, the two migrants whose parents moved to Britain, draw attention to other ways in which migration can affect relationships between adult children and their parents. Martin's family was forced to leave South Africa on an exit visa when he was in his teens. He relates the burden he now faces in caring for his widowed mother to his parents' ambivalence about establishing a social network in Britain, their ongoing engagement with South Africa and the lack of a wider family system. Steven sees his parents' decision to move to Britain more recently as forcing him to play a central part in their lives to make up for their difficulties in establishing a new social network. However, descriptions of

limitations in state support for the elderly suggest that their migration confronted him with a troubling contrast between aging in Britain and the country he had sought to escape. Had they remained in South Africa, there would have been greater access to easily affordable domestic labour, helping him in his task of caring for them.

A number of migrants focused on non-migrant siblings in reflecting on the losses others might have incurred through their decisions to migrate. As with most participants, Charlie begins by discussing the political reasons he left. Although many others prioritized the political in reflecting on relationships with siblings, he prioritizes the personal and downplays the political. When asked about his non-migrant family he spoke about his “guilt” at leaving his only sibling, Alex, at a particularly vulnerable time in his life. Shortly after this he says:

Charlie: If you [...] we [...] *and*] I migrate in our early twenties, there are many issues *notwithstanding* South African politics - that you *never* work out with your family basically.

Charlie’s statement draws a parallel between difficulties in reworking how white South Africans like his family were positioned, or positioned themselves in relation to apartheid, and reconciling themselves with the consequences of migration. As it follows on from mentioning his “guilt” about Alex, the statement suggests that he is particularly concerned about the possibility they might “*never*”

construct a different relationship with one another. He goes on to mention another area of “guilt” in relation to his brother. Leaving meant that his brother carries far more responsibility for the care of their increasingly frail parents than he does. On Charlie’s recommendation, his brother Alex participated in the research. Alex prioritizes the same two issues in discussing migration, the timing of Charlie’s migration and caring for their parents. This suggests that, even though these brothers have not been able to “work out” a different solution, they have a shared understanding of some of the tensions and losses that inform their relationship.

The issues Jack, Martin, Steven and Charlie highlight different aspects of loss. However, the emphasis they place on the losses of others seems to reflect a projection of what is painful onto others. It accords with proposals that when faced with the anxiety of lack of certitude, “we can reassure ourselves of our sense of rootedness by watching and worrying about others’ uprootedness” (Yngvesson and Mahoney, 2000, p78).

### **5.1.2 Loss as personal**

In contrast, Melanie and Sonja place greater emphasis on the losses that they, rather than others, incurred. Melanie, whose siblings have all migrated, begins her account by explaining why she migrated. Although she positions herself, rather than her husband, as deciding to leave, she frames her migration as

forced: it was based on a desire to escape feeling as if apartheid “was my own - I owned that problem”. As reflected in discussing Jack’s account, one of the consequences of portraying the political context as forcing her to leave is that it allows the values ascribed to living in close proximity to family to remain unaffected, despite events that challenge this view.

In discussing the implications for her family, Melanie describes her struggle to balance caring for young children with full-time paid employment. Although this issue is not particular to migrants, she sees the absence of practical family support as exacerbating her struggles. It echoes research focused on white South African migrants to Canada in which McCabe, Schoenfeld and Schoenfeld (1999) found that reduced access to easily affordable domestic help exposed the women who migrated to the requirements of the system they had sought to escape. Melanie continues by saying:

Melanie: I feel like I can’t breathe here - I’m like under so much pressure. So - and I think my parents are aware of that - so I’m saying you know - we’re - this migration isn’t - here people talk about the grandparents - the dividend paid - the price paid - and I’m sure you’ve heard of all of that - but I just feel as a personal - as a personal – erm - on a personal level - not only on children and the continuation and the natural flow and communication and all that.

The narrative positions disruptions to anticipated relationships between grandchildren and grandparents as widely shared and spoken about, and the difficulties of the migrant as unrecognized. Melanie emphasizes her own difficulties with the extreme case formulation (Potter, 1996) “I can’t breathe here”, and repetition of “personal”. However, disruptions and qualifiers indicate ambivalence about the ideas she presents. They suggest that prioritizing her own loss may be a defence against reflecting on the loss her non-migrant parents have incurred. By drawing attention to her parents’ awareness of her situation, Melanie implies that they remain integral to authenticating her experience. However, the loss that dominates her account suggests that, even if retaining them as an ongoing ‘psychological presence’ (Boss, 1991, 1999) in her life might be helpful, it is also problematic: it constructs the presence of an absence as an enduring aspect of life following migration.

It is impossible to know exactly what Melanie meant with the words the “price” and “dividend”. As she begins the interview by saying that she wanted to stop feeling that apartheid was “my own [...] problem”, and returns to this point throughout her account, this may mean that she regards disruptions to the “natural flow” with grandchildren as one of the costs her parents are paying for choosing to live and bring up their children in a highly racialized context. However, framing her parents as needing to pay a “price” for racialized privilege may reflect an attempt to project her own sense of discomfort about apartheid



onto her parents. Consequently, prioritizing “personal” difficulties may be a way of dealing with her own position as a white South African and as someone who did not stay to address a problem she described as “my own”.

Elsewhere Melanie indicates that becoming members of a Jewish community in Britain allowed her to provide her children with a cultural identity that felt familiar to her. However, differences in local traditions and attitudes and the absence of her parents mean that has not only helped her maintain a sense of continuity between her past, present and anticipated future: it highlights has been lost.

In contrast, the account of Sonja, a woman with one sibling in Britain and another two in South Africa shows how prioritizing a relational commitment can be experienced as forcing a migrant to compromise her political values. Near the start of her first interview she explains that her possession of a British passport enabled her husband to escape military service. However, it forced her to leave a “life that made sense to me”: work focused on bridging racialized inequities within South Africa.

Sonja returns to the problematic consequences of her forced migration throughout her account, suggesting that her sense of self and family remain dominated by the uchronic (Portelli, 1990, 2002), by the life that might have been. In common with several other migrants, she frames the earlier post-migratory years as particularly difficult and says later that her difficulties in

dealing with the “rupture” posed by migrating “had a *huge* impact on my children and the kind of parent I was”. The identity compromises posed by leaving, and/or the contrast between her anticipated and lived experience, continue to dominate how she feels in the present.

In contrast, she offers a series of narratives to show that migration did not alter her relationship with her non-migrant parents: untimely separations from their parents meant that they, her own parents, were never able to establish a real “connection” with her or her siblings. Sonja terminates the second interview, saying that she feels ill and has little to add. However, she chose to end just after speaking about her father’s funeral. Ending at this point suggests that migration was not only been problematic because it was forced and limited her ability to engage more actively with South Africa on a political level. It limited the chances of establishing a different sort of relationship with parents whom she had found emotionally unavailable. One of her non-migrant siblings, Greg, also agreed to participate in the research. In common with Sonja, he privileges the political in presenting his construction of migration and frames the decision to remain as a more politically-responsible stance. However, a fleeting positive reference to how life might have been different had they lived closer suggests that, as with his sister, prioritizing the political may be aimed at obscuring personal discourses that are more difficult to articulate.

I would not want to dispute the portrayals of losses discussed in this section or question the view that under apartheid, the political was integral to constructions of self and family. However, non-discursive markers like gaps in narrating and heteroglossic use of language indicate that prioritizing these aspects of identity may have been aimed at obscuring others. It is impossible to know what remains unsaid. One possibility is that problematizing the experience of non-migrants serves to mask the migrants' own loss and/or envy of those who remained. Another is that emphasizing loss reflects what Wilce (1998) calls trouble talk: it creates greater equity between the positions of migrants and non-migrants as it challenges the notion that migration has been an easy option that only involved gain. This is likely to be particularly important where leaving involved choice and is now seen to reflect a more responsible personal and/or political stance.

Although the narratives discussed raise somewhat different issues, they all illustrate how constructions of migration can be dominated by the uchronic (Portelli, 1990, 2002), by how life might have been different had history taken a different course. It is not clear whether these participants had anticipated the challenges outlined here when they decided to migrate. Although many frame the earlier post-migratory years as particularly problematic, frequent references to parents' increased needs for care suggest that parents' aging and increased vulnerability has heightened their awareness of the problematic consequences of migrating. Since most of the migrants are now the ages their parents were when they decided to leave, these portrayals are likely to draw on experiences of

increased separation from their own children. Consequently, these narratives support Gardner's (2002) call to interrogate the intersection between movements between places and movements across the life course.

## **5.2 Narratives of opportunity**

Hirschman (1970) proposed that when individuals are unable to 'voice' objections and/or change a situation they find untenable, leaving or withdrawing psychologically may represent expressions of agency and 'voice'. This view appears to underpin narratives that reflect what Aktar (1995) calls a third individuation, that migration offered an opportunity to construct a more comfortable position in relation to family and/or histories of racialized privilege than would otherwise have been possible.

Jeannette and Adam's accounts focus primarily on the chance to reposition themselves in relation to family while Steven focuses more on the political. However, in each case, despite attempts to keep the personal and political separate, constructions of self and family seem to be bound by a political drama that is steeped in apartheid and histories of white privilege.

### **5.2.1 A chance to reposition oneself in terms of family**

In the interests of extending understandings of the impact of migration on sibling relationships, I have chosen to focus on migrants' portrayals of their relationships with a non-migrant sibling. This does not mean that this strategy was only evident in discussing sibling relationships. For example, in Chapter 7, in analyzing responses to encounters that lead to an altered understanding of the consequences of migration, I discuss portrayals of the opportunities, as well as difficulties, migration posed to intergenerational relationships.

Although Jeannette prioritizes her experience of family over that of the political, as indicated in Chapter 4, she frames her decision to leave in terms of a desire to escape "that reprehensible regime". Her only sibling Michael, a non-migrant, called on the telephone soon after I arrived at her home. However, having mentioned he had some health worries, she said little more about him. Instead she focused on her own struggles to adjust to living away from her family and familiar "milieu" and the damaging consequences migration has had for her children. This is juxtaposed by positioning migration as creating access to better professional opportunities than would have been possible in South Africa. Curious about Michael's relative absence from her account, I ask about him after a fairly abstract discussion about their careers:

JA: I must say this is a huge question but erm - what impact do you think your being here and your having left has had on your relationship with him?

Jeanette: Oh – yes (*pause*)

JA: What do you think it's like for him?

Jeanette: Erm - yes - (*more slowly*) yeah - I think – I - I sort of lie low with him when I'm with him – because - although he gets to hear of something or other I do - you know – erm - he's - he's proud - in the way my mother was too. Ah - I think the real feeling is that - erm - I don't know how to put this. He hasn't had these opportunities - and his life hasn't worked out so well - I mean in the - in the public sense.

The interchange begins with a question I describe as “huge”: how living apart and “having left” has influenced her relationship with Michael. Jeanette's response is just to acknowledge the question. On being prompted to say more, she introduces the first of several narratives which positions migration as an attempt to ensure that her sense of self would not remain dominated by her brother's negative views of her. In contrast to the free-flowing style of earlier aspects of her account, this interchange is slower and replete with hesitancies, fillers and qualifiers. This indicates an attempt to collect her thoughts, and/or ambivalence about including memories about their relationship in her account. However, it also reflects the co-constructed nature of this exchange and is a response to the

suggestion that I view sibling relationships as having “huge” significance for understandings of self and migration.

Jeannette emphasizes differentials in power. There is no indication of what she means by “opportunities” and how his life hasn’t “worked well [...] in the public sense”. However, earlier references to their careers indicate that she sees migration as having led to disparities in professional opportunities. The qualifier “I mean in the – in the public sense”, and reference to having to “lie low” with Michael and her mother suggest that she views both of these relationships as antagonistic. It also suggests that there are other areas in which she sees him as more powerful than her, implying that her altered self-image might be too fragile to bear the consequences of such confrontations. This is supported by subsequent references to his being her mother’s favourite and positioning him as humiliating her and her children: someone who can “come in and savage” them with hurtful comments:

Jeannette: I’ll tell you something quite painful – erm - but I suppose - I suppose funny. As I said to you I was erm - I was – in – in - South Africa - as I grew up I - I felt very plain - and I was very freckled as a child [...] I felt very very plain - and almost um - and um ashamed of myself - and that was kind of my image in the family - of being a sort of plain freak - and - my brother still has that view of me.

Jeannette relates being positioned as a “plain freak” to the dangers of being in Michael’s presence. The description of herself as a “plain freak” is presented in a narrative which follows on from mentioning a need to “lie low” when with him and ends by saying “my brother still has that view of me”. It is significant that she uses the past tense when referring to her family’s negative view of her, and the present in relation to Michael. Framing him as continuing to see her in this way may be because she finds appearing shameful in his eyes particularly humiliating. However, it may also mean that it is more humiliating to imagine that others might continue to see her this way too.

The narrative reflects a tension between the desire to censor and narrate. Qualifiers like “quite”, “I suppose”, “kind of” and “sort of”, and reframing the “painful” as “funny” suggest a downplaying of the humiliation Jeannette describes. However, the extreme case “very” and “freak” position this experience as ongoing, suggesting she remains at risk of being drawn back into seeing herself as a “plain freak” when with Michael.

Jeannette refers elsewhere to their having been able to develop a more comfortable relationship with one another, a relationship in which they can discuss “adult things”. Living apart from Michael may well have been central to constructing a more positive self-image. However, references to positive change suggest that a continued focus on the damaging relationship of the past offers a



defence against considering the possibility that living in closer proximity might have help them reach a less fragile resolution of their earlier difficulties.

No link is drawn between the embodied nature of a “freckled [...] plain freak” and racialized humiliation. However, by locating this positioning “in- in- in South Africa” as well as in Michael’s eyes, there is a suggestion that this use of physical appearance to humiliate is bound up with her experience of South Africa and that at some level, Michael has become metonymic with apartheid South Africa.

Adam presents a more unusual account of a desire for distance from a place in which his life had been dominated by a sibling. Like most participants, he begins by explaining why he left. He positions himself as a political activist in describing his involvement in opposing apartheid activism and his growing realization of the likelihood of imprisonment. He returns to his activist identity later in discussing what he lost through migrating: the “friendship [...] that kind of loyalty you find in err in in places where there is repression”. Comments like this and extended accounts of the circumstances leading to his migration indicate that this aspect of identity is central to how he sees himself, and that he remains, or perhaps has become, troubled by his decision to leave.

When speaking about his family, Adam says that migration offered him a chance to escape from a situation in which “I didn’t find my family that easy” as well. He uses the word “repressed” to describe his family and mentions that their

tendency towards repression began as a response to the death of his older sister. References to his sister throughout his account indicate that she remains a powerful and largely painful presence in his life and the lives of the rest of the family. When asked how his migration had affected his parents, he says that when his sister died, his parents took a decision to “be strong for our sakes”. This meant that he never saw them cry and that they maintained this approach to subsequent difficulties in their lives. Therefore, it was impossible for him to know how they felt about his decision to migrate.

At a later point Adam introduces what appears to be an emerging discourse, in saying: “I I –I think I very much put a lot of the blame - for the things on my - on my parents”. He goes on to discuss his growing realization that he too might have responded differently, suggesting a re-owning of uncomfortable aspects of self that had previously been projected onto his parents. He relates his altered view of himself to more affordable telephone calls and changes in the life course, including becoming a parent and his own parents’ aging. However, as he uses the term “repressed” in relation to South Africa as well as his family, and positions apartheid as integral to how he sees himself, it is possible that change in relation to his family positioning is bound up with the uncertainties which opened up as a result of political change.

### 5.2.2 A chance to reposition oneself in relation to the political

This section draws on the account of Steven, a man whose younger sister lives in Britain and whose parents migrated more recently. It shows how prioritizing the political can mask identity claims that pertain to family. Steven begins by mentioning military service on the Angolan border:

Steven: I left in September seventy-six - um - I had returned from three months on the Angolan border fighting for err the South African army which was my second stint - and completed National Service. Um - and within - two months of having returned from the border I - departed with my then girlfriend for England. *[Names of countries he travelled through and date of migration omitted to preserve confidentiality]* - um - my father is an immigrant - he's a - double immigrant actually because he fled Hitler at exactly the same age as I left South Africa.

The narrative contextualizes migration in terms of Steven having completed a three month 'stint' in the South African Army. He does not explain the link between the military and migration. Although he mentions details like length of service and where he was based, it is replete with hesitancies and concrete facts, a pattern I observed in working with parents who found it difficult to discuss their life-limiting medical conditions with their children (Altschuler, Dale and Sass-

Booth, 1999). It illustrates how the certainties of facts can be used to obscure what is more difficult to articulate. It is worth mentioning that, at a later stage, Steven uses emotionally-laden language in discussing the army, as in speaking of his “absolute terror” of going back into the army, and his determination that his son would “*never – get into a uniform – ever*”. However, here too he avoids saying what this “absolute terror” denotes. In so doing, he leaves open whether he is referring to protecting himself and his son from being harmed, from harming others and/or from viewing himself as potentially harmful.

Steven ends by drawing a parallel between his own migration and his father’s “double” migration, from Germany to South Africa and, as he explains later, from South Africa to Britain. The shift from the army to a migration to escape anti-Semitism suggests a desire to supplant the image of himself as oppressing with that of a potential victim. Although it serves to legitimate the decision to leave, hesitations suggest that aligning his experience with that of his father is informed by differences that are unsaid. Steven continues to contrast their experiences, mentioning similarities in their ages at migration and positioning both migrations as a response to untenable politicized contexts. However, he omits to mention that, whilst living as a Jew in Nazi-dominated Germany exposed his father to anti-Semitic victimization, living as a white person in South Africa positioned him as a beneficiary and potential perpetrator of racialized oppression.

In the second interview, Steven says that some non-migrants viewed migration as the action of a “running rat”. He qualifies this by saying that his accusers did not have to go to Angola and face dangers like “scorpions” themselves. This view is ascribed to others. However, there are suggestions that recent work with black South African peers has forced him to question his decision to leave and the view that he had been able to stand outside of the racialization that dominated the context in which he had lived. Consequently, the accusation of a “running rat” may reflect his own view of the past.

A difference Stephen does mention is that whilst his father was “deeply traumatized by - the double punch of falling out with his father at the same time as things were falling apart in Germany”, he made sure he was more supportive of Steven’s decision to leave. Despite trying to adopt what appears to be a ‘corrective script’ (Byng-Hall, 1985, 1995), repeated references to his father’s past suggest that aspects of Steven’s life have been dominated by ‘postmemories’ (Hirsch, 1999) of his father’s past. He alludes to this in saying that his father’s experiences have left him, Steven, with a sense that “something catastrophic is going to happen and I – I am going to be ready for it when it does”. The emphasis he places on his father’s experience suggests that, as important as the political might have been, migration also represented a chance to construct a self-image that was less dominated by his father and the stories of his past.

Interestingly, like his parents, he has chosen to live with someone who has a history of migration but whose cultural background is different to his own: although his wife is the child of migrant parents, she is neither Jewish nor South African. His choice of a marriage partner may represent an affirmation of his ability to separate from aspects of the past he found burdensome. However, it may also represent the importance of a shared legacy of migration to his experience of intimacy.

Steven's account demonstrates how identity as a Jew can be used to construct a range of particular, yet far from homogeneous, positions in relation to apartheid. The quotation above shows how histories of displacement and oppression can be used to minimize Jews' positions as white privileged, legitimating the right, or even need, to leave South Africa. He presents a second view in arguing that his parents' experiences of anti-Semitism increased their sensitivity to the oppression of others, leading to a decision to adopt an active stance against apartheid. Elsewhere, he presents his parents' stance as unusual: he uses the terms Jewish and white South African interchangeably to suggest that in common with all white South Africans, apartheid-based ideologies were indicative of the doxic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991) understanding of Jews.

The latter is evident in a narrative in which Steven draws attention to the taken for granted nature of his non-migrant aunt's racism. He uses a high-pitched voice and strong South African accent in reporting how she called him to the telephone by saying "Steven – it's your black friend" loud enough for the caller to hear. As

to my ear, he seemed to have 'lost' much of his accent when speaking through his own voice, this switch in accent seemed aimed at differentiating himself from his aunt. Stephen mentions that this event took place during a traditionally Jewish Sabbath supper. This suggests that, rather than relating to their positions as white South Africans alone, the story is aimed at differentiating their positions as white Jewish South Africans as well. Whilst he provides other reasons for his reluctance to become involved in establishment Jewish communities, this conflation of Jewish and white South African positions suggests he sees them as partly synonymous.

There are considerable differences between the gains Jeannette, Adam and Steven mention in discussing the consequences of migration. However their accounts illustrate how prioritizing certain aspects of identity can be a defence against, or an attempt to downplay issues that are more uncomfortable to articulate. They suggest that prioritizing the advantages of the identity implications of living apart from particular family members can be bound up with the desire for distance in relation to apartheid-based positions, just as prioritizing the political seems aimed at masking issues that pertain to the family. In each case, the need to rework past positions is described as essential rather than preferred, supporting the proposal that emphasizing "the usefulness and success of their lives by stressing the positive aspects of reality" (Portelli, 1990, p155) can silence the discourses of negation to the extent that they are only apparent in digressions and gaps in what is said.

As reflected in the previous section, these narratives highlight the importance of considering the intersection between migratory, gendered and racialized aspects of identity. Although the men and women contextualize their accounts in terms of the family as well as apartheid, in their initial spontaneously produced narratives, women tend to prioritize the family and men the political. However, exceptions emphasize the need to consider how gender intersects with other aspects of identity: Sonja focused much of her account on the consequences of being forced to let go of politically-informed work and Jack and Steven focused more on family.

### **5.3 Migration as a site of continuity**

This third part of the chapter focuses on narratives that demonstrate how migration can be positioned as posing relatively little challenge to anticipated experiences of self and family.

Several participants focus on intergenerational relationships in presenting migration as a site of continuities rather than disruptions in identities. As mentioned above, in view of the limited academic attention devoted to siblings' experiences of migration and my understanding of its particular relevance to apartheid, I have chosen to draw on excerpts in which Gillian and Rachael reflect on sibling relationships. This first section focuses primarily on family and the



second on the political. However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, these two aspects of identity appear to be inextricably linked.

### **5.3.1 Privileging continuities that relate to family**

Gillian is the only child in her family to have left South Africa. She positions her migration as a replication of family and collective histories of Jewish displacement, framing migration as integral to her understanding of what it means to be a family.

Like Sonja, Gillian downplays the extent to which migration affected the relationship between her and her parents. She suggests that her mother's ill health and career and both parents' pre-occupation with their "wonderful marriage" meant they were relatively unavailable to her: she and her brothers "were like the furniture". She emphasizes this by contrasting her relationship with her mother with the relationship she was able to establish with the mothers of some of her friends. This suggests that, as a child, she learnt to look to others to make up for gaps in parental care.

Accounts of life in Britain indicate that, despite having moved over thirty years before, Gillian continues to see herself as a relative outsider. She relates this sense of herself to how she feels positioned by "the English". However, the parallel between her portrayals of exclusion by "the English," and her parents

suggests that her current experience is imbued with feelings that relate to her childhood.

Gillian offers detailed descriptions about how she has established supportive networks with other people who feel marginalized, framing her identity as a Jew as offering access to membership of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) of British Jewry. However, as with Melanie, differences in local tradition mean that she feels a particular sense of alienation when acting as part of this community. She seems to have dealt with her outsider position by developing a social network with other outsiders, with South Africans, other migrants and people who moved to London from elsewhere in Britain. She likens this social network to family, a framing that seems to replicate a pattern of looking to others to substitute for the absence of family support when younger.

Although Gillian describes most non-migrant white South Africans, particularly women, as living in a "cabbage land" in which they were unquestioning of apartheid, she excludes a particular group of non-migrants: her siblings, their partners and a few close friends. As she said little about her siblings in the first interview, I began the second by restating the research question and saying I was interested in "you and your kids - or you and your siblings". Rather than focusing on her siblings, Gillian responded by saying that: "even though we're – 6,000 miles from the rest of the family - we're incredibly close". Her use of the geographic distance and 'extreme case formulation' (Potter, 1996), "incredibly

close” seem aimed at indicating that, instead of migration increasing emotional distance, they have remained a ‘psychological presence’ (Boss, 1991, 1999) in one another’s lives. Her focus on “rest of the family” may indicate that sibling relationships are so taken-for-granted she assumes they are not of research interest. However, it may reflect an unwillingness to expose relationships with siblings to research scrutiny. As I was curious about this shift and the relative invisibility of her siblings, I continued by asking:

JA: So how do you think it’s - influenced your life that you’re not living with them (*her siblings*)?

Gillian: (*talks over*) Well in actual fact - we *are* with them. It doesn’t matter – erm - we are with them in the sense that the distance makes no difference. [...]

JA: What do think it meant for them - your leaving South Africa and their staying and being part of it - or having to face the changes - or whatever words you’d use?

Gillian: I think it’s just - they’ve just taken it on board - and they’ve - and they - they enjoy whatever we do. I don’t know how else to say it. They actually revel in it - whatever daft thing we’re going to do next. I mean - when Tony (*her son*) died they were all over. There wasn’t even a question about it. They all came the next day - they came.

Gillian uses extreme case formulations, such as “whatever”, emphasis, as “we are”, and certainties in refuting the possibility that geographic dispersal might have had a distancing effect on sibling relationships. She demonstrates this by positioning her siblings as enjoying “whatever daft” thing she and her family of procreation choose to do, and their readiness to support her at a time of crisis, after her son's death. As discussed in Chapter 2, adult negotiations of what it means to be similar or different to a sibling are likely to have been informed by far earlier sibling dynamics. Consequently, the strategy of minimizing difference may relate to a desire to minimize differences that pre-date migration too.

Hesitancies, qualifiers and a reference to taking certain things “on board” suggest that Gillian's refutation of change obscures issues that do not fit with this view. Her refutation focuses on reunions. However, because the reunions she mentions relate to occasional and exceptional times, they are likely to have affirmed discontinuities as well: they would have been informed by the anticipation of another separation. Gillian does not explain what “taken on board” might denote, and I do not ask her to elaborate. As she alludes elsewhere to disparities in financial opportunities, it is likely that their shared enjoyment in “daft” things relies on accepting her financial generosity.

On being asked if there was anything she wanted to add before ending, Gillian said that reading Nelson Mandela's autobiography opened her eyes to aspects of her positioning as white she had not seen before. It left her “ashamed” of her

inaction. She moves on to speak about the possibility of undertaking some work in the “townships”. This suggests a desire to replace the image of herself as shameful with that of someone working to repair the damages caused by apartheid. Several other participants described reading Mandela’s autobiography as a significant turning point as well. Their comments suggest that his book has not only confronted white South Africans with fractured notions of self. It has contributed to a desire, or perhaps pressure, to rework identities so that they fit better with how they wish to be seen in the present. Although Gillian does not link her awareness of racialized shame with her siblings, because she defers speaking about both aspects of experience, there may be a link between her altered understanding of her positioning in terms apartheid and perceptions of her relationships with siblings.

The contested nature of this interchange also suggests that Gillian and I have an added investment in the stance we are trying to present. It demonstrates the complexities of drawing on insider understandings as a guide to interrogating the unsaid. At the time, I saw the question I asked Gillian as encouraging her to reflect on relationships which, based on my personal as well as academic understanding, I saw as important. The language I used implies a range of different possibilities: “being part of” denotes choice and inclusion, “having to” denotes coercion and exclusion and “whatever words you’d use” alludes to the optional and personal nature of language. On re-reading the transcripts, I can see that my question challenges Gillian’s claim to an “incredibly close” and

largely unchanged relationship with her siblings. Consequently, although the emphatic “in actual fact - *we are* with them” and “distance makes no difference” may be a statement of her view, it is likely to be a defence against what appears to be a refutation of her experience. Similarly, although I appear not to mention apartheid, the phrase “having to face the changes” frames differences in relation to post-apartheid South Africa as doxic.

### **5.3.2 Privileging continuities that relate to the political**

As with Gillian, Rachael's account indicates that migratory decisions need not be distinctive or characterized by loss, but can contribute to maintaining a sense of identity and relational continuity. In outlining the research methodology, I mentioned that Rachael's account is unusual in that her claim to whiteness is more contested than the claims of the other research participants. My engagement with her is also particular because my first impression on meeting her was to wonder whether she knew that the research was restricted to white South Africans. Within the first few minutes of meeting, she states:

Rachael: I was born in South Africa – but um my parents are Indian um – it's relevant to say that they were *declared white* – by application – but we are *not* white South Africans – and er – that's how we came to be white South Africans (*laughs*).

Rachael's decision to introduce reclassification at the start of the interview seems aimed at indicating that her response to migration is informed by a history of negotiating contested aspects of her and her parents' identifications with other 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983), with South Africa and India, and with those who "are", "are *not*" and have been "*declared white*". It suggests that this issue is highly significant to her understanding of herself, migration, and the issues she imagines I wish to explore. However, it may also indicate that she had anticipated, or is aware, of my first reaction to her.

The narrative reflects a theme that Rachael returns to throughout her account: her own agency in relation to reclassification. Using the past tense and third person in referring to crossing racialized boundaries implies a disowning of agency. This is contested with her use of "we" and the present in discussing her positioning as a white South African. The latter denotes a greater sense of solidarity with her family of origin and a personal sense of agency in maintaining the racialized status her parents' decision made possible.

As evident in Jeannette's account, racialized status is positioned as contingent on place, on being in South Africa. Rachael emphasizes this by drawing on an Indian ancestry to position aspects of identity in terms of a place in which apartheid-based boundaries are less relevant. However, despite positioning racialized classification as dependent on decrees of law and the performance of

whiteness, the essentialist statement “we are *not* white South Africans” and laughter after asserting the claim to legitimate white status, refute this.

Rachael’s use of the term “Indian” illustrates how, under apartheid, place could be used to denote racialized status. It indicates a taken-for-granted knowledge that an ancestry from certain countries signified a non-white status. Locating aspects of her identity in terms of her parents’ country of origin suggests that her positioning in relation to South Africa is likely to remain significant to her as well as to her British-born child. References to engaging with certain Indian community networks in Britain suggest that migration has led to re-claiming aspects of her identity as an Indian that had to be censored in the interest of protecting her status as white. However, because Indian people cannot be reclassified in Britain, this assertion may be part of wanting or ‘having to’ reclaim Indianness.

Rachael goes on to say that her mother’s ambivalence about reclassification had a negative impact on her psychological well-being, with damaging consequences for her relationships with both of her daughters. However, this narrative positions both parents as responsible for failing to protect her from the consequences of their contested racialized status. In contrast, she suggests that her sister Mira was integral to helping her negotiate this contested status.



Rachael: There wasn't - there wasn't anyone who – who – you know had our lives - I mean it was - a *fact* - it wasn't sort of – making oneself *different* - it was just a fact.

The contrast between “our lives” and the lives of “anyone” else constructs their racialized status as extremely unusual. It suggests that the need for secrecy bound her and Mira together, an issue she articulates more clearly elsewhere. It illustrates how, for much of her account Rachael frames their subjectivity in relation to racialized privilege as shared. This is reflected in comments like “we fitted nowhere” and “we were trained to be white South Africans”.

Hesitancies and emphases suggest a particular investment in, and ambivalence about what to say. The ambiguous “who – who – you know had our lives” allows Rachael to avoid defining how she dealt with her positioning as white privileged. This may result from censoring memories that are uncomfortable in an interview with someone whom she presumably assumes has a less contested status as white. However, it is also a reflection of how there is still no recognized term to denote the “humiliation of being ‘less than white’” at the same time being positioned as “‘better than black’” (Erasmus, 2000, p13). Although “*fact*” defends the authenticity of her claim, the intensity of this refutation suggests that her statement is a form of prolepsis, a defence against the potential accusations of others as well as of her own internalized contestations. It is only when, in the second interview, I ask whether Mandela’s release and independence “changed

things” for her, that Rachael uses “I” rather than “we” or “our” in reflecting on her racialized status.

JA: And after Mandela’s release - and independence - did it - did it change things for you at all or not really?

Rachael: My sister had said something after that. She said - *‘it’s all over now (pause) that’s finished now – I never want to go back there’ (pause)*. It didn’t – I remember standing in the *queue* - to vote - to vote thinking - that there was *no-one* that I could say to ‘was it like that for you too?’ - because there wasn’t anyone in that queue - who’d had this bizarre - double life really – it was a - life of lies.

The shift to “I” suggests that voting signified a turning point, an end to having to, or being able to, draw on their shared subjectivity to make sense of experiences of racialization. The timing of Rachael’s pauses, one after reporting Mira as saying apartheid was over, and another after using “I” to say “I *never* want to go back there”, indicate these two statements have a particular resonance for her. Reflecting on the differences between an imagined return and escape from “back there” seem to place her in a troubled subject position. Although the emphatic “*no-one*” suggests that the issues she has to consider are particular to her, pauses indicate a need to think carefully about differentiating her stance from that of her sister.

Although all the interviews were informed by a “representational space that is always politically marked” (Minh-ha, 1994, p10), Rachael’s account heightened my awareness of my own positioning as a white South African and the need to consider how my own transference impacts on the process of the interview. Rachael’s use of “*no-one*” positions our researcher-participant relationship in terms of our personal and collective histories of racialization: it emphasizes that regardless of my position as a migrant and white South African, our histories mean that I am amongst those who cannot understand her experience of “this bizarre - double life”. Rachael’s comments were prompted by my asking how her views had been affected by Mandela’s release and South Africa’s independent status. The hesitant and leading nature of my question reflects a struggle to balance a particular interest in how her views might have changed following these events, with ethical concerns about asking her to address issues I imagined were uncomfortable.

The excerpts discussed here illustrate how sibling relationships can be positioned as integral to maintaining continuities in identity. However, Gillian downplays the identity and relational consequences of migratory decisions and Rachael positions these decisions as central to maintaining continuities. While Gillian frames distance from her parents as a replication of a childhood experiences, Rachael frames migration as allowing her to establish far greater distance from her mother than might otherwise have been possible. Moreover,

Gillian positions experiences of family as removed from the racialization that dominated the society in which she grew up, while for Rachael, family and racialization are presented as inextricably linked.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter indicates that for white South African migrants, experiences of migration constructed, and were constructed through, the family. It indicates that their responses to the identity and relational implications of migration are likely to be affected by material factors like health status and access to different resources within the transnational field (Carling, 2005; Faist, 2000; Papastergiades, 2000). However, it also indicates that to make sense of accounts of leaving South Africa during apartheid, it is important to consider how the intersection between constructions of migration and racialization contributes to the acknowledgement and underplaying of losses and gains.

As reflected in all four data analytic chapters, portrayals of migration were far from uniform. Three patterns were identified. They include framing migration as having problematic consequences for identities and relationships; as an opportunity to construct a preferred identity; and as having had relatively little impact on aspects of identity and relationships that are considered important.

The chapter indicated that the highly racialized nature of South Africa meant that, even if apartheid was not mentioned, it informed the ways in which participants presented the challenges migration had posed to self and family. This does not mean that all of these migrants ascribed similar values to the decisions to leave. Most presented migration as a form of opposition against apartheid. Although I would not want to discredit the idea that migration might have been a form of demonstrating opposition to apartheid, the analysis showed how claiming what is effectively an exile identity could represent a defence against other unpalatable aspects of migration. There were also suggestions of a growing realization that remaining in the country might have presented a more responsible stance in relation to the political context and to concerns about older, more vulnerable family members. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, in most cases, this view seemed to reflect an emerging discourse, suggesting that factors like changes in the life course and/or the dismantling of apartheid might have led to a different understanding of self, family and the society in which they had lived.

A number of factors seemed to account for diversities in portrayal. They included positions in the life course; family dynamics; whether the relationship under discussion was with a parent or sibling; gender; access to alternate sites of cultural or ethnic identifications; and my own engagement with what they were saying. Other important factors include perceptions of the impact of migration on other family members and the meanings that they and their family ascribed to the decision to leave.

The nature of the sample I selected contributed to why positions in the life course were particularly significant. As discussed in Chapter 3, restricting the sample to migrations that took place during apartheid and when migrants were in their early twenties meant that the majority of the migrants and their migrant kin were over fifty, with a range from forty to eighty. Consequently, many migrants were the age their parents had been when they decided to migrate. As such, they were members of what has been described as the 'pivot generation' (Mooney and Statham, 2002), people who are of an age when they tend to be involved in providing some level of care for their parents and have children who are still dependent on them. This may account for why their accounts were replete with references to the positions of elderly non-migrant parents. This focus on the consequences of migration for elderly non-migrants and supports calls to pay more attention to the embodied nature of migratory narratives (Gardner, 2002), and the ways in which life stories are conveyed through bodies and the performances they give (Butler, 1990; Probyn, 1993, 1996).

It is unclear whether these migrants had anticipated the possibility that leaving their parents might exacerbate the challenges their parents would face in coming to terms with aging and increased frailty. As evident in Jack's description of his mother's request for him to "do something" for her, reflecting on the consequences for elderly parents seemed to place most participants in troubled subject positions. This was not the case for all. Gillian and Sonja framed distance

from their parents as unrelated to migration: it was a continuation of a pattern of relating that had been established when they were children. These differences emphasize the need to consider how attempts to warrant identity claims are informed by other aspects of identity including family dynamics that pre-date decisions to migrate.

Encouraging participants to reflect on the consequences of migration for different family members allowed for an analysis of how their views were affected by whether they were discussing a sibling or parent. When speaking spontaneously, most participants tended to prioritize relationships with their parents and say less about their siblings. This trend may be because their positions in the life course mean that they are currently more pre-occupied with their parents' frailty and have a greater understanding of the challenges parents face when children become increasingly independent. Another explanation is that sibling relationships were seen as less important or less troubling than intergenerational relationships, or that they have been taken for granted to the extent that they are viewed as uninteresting for academic study.

However, the tendency to downplay the significance of sibling relationships is not particular to situations of migrancy or to this research: it reflects a pattern that, until recently, was evident in most psychological and sociological theorizing (Edwards, Hadfield, Lucey and Mauthner, 2006). More recent theorizing suggests that there may be other reasons why speaking about siblings was

avoided. This work has led to the view that sibling relationships are not only integral to the development of identities, but that a sibling is someone who is both the same as us, but at some level “stands in one’s place” (Mitchell, 2003 p10). Therefore, the tendency to delay speaking about siblings may reflect ambivalence about saying more about someone who represents the life that these migrants might have adopted as well.

The work of theorists like Bourdieu (1984, 1999) work suggests that membership of the same age cohort will mean that siblings are likely to have been exposed to relatively similar habitus and doxa about the family and the society in which they live. Consequently, the importance siblings accorded to apartheid is because it was one of key discourses circulating in the context in which they and their non-migrant siblings grew up. In contrast, with the exception of references to cross-racialized relationships within the home, migrants tended to say little about apartheid when speaking about their parents. However, rather than racialization being irrelevant to relationships with parents, downplaying apartheid may represent a defence against confronting identifications with parents that were troubling to consider.

Gender contributed to accounts of migration as well. Most of the women prioritized the relational and men the political when speaking spontaneously about migration. Moreover, the women’s accounts tended to be more contested than the men’s. Because these stories were told to a woman, these differences



may reflect gendered assumptions of what is appropriate to say. However, there were notable exceptions and once asked to elaborate on what had been underplayed, other aspects of identity were also presented as highly significant. In addition, the contested nature of the narratives these men and women presented when asked to elaborate on what had been left unsaid suggests that this emphasis did not necessarily relate to gender but to a desire to downplay other issues that were troubling to address.

Gender was integral to constructions of migrating in other ways too. Unlike white women, white men were required to serve in the South African Army (SAA), which around the time when these participants left, involved active service on the borders or in the black townships of South Africa. A number of men framed compulsory military service as the main reason for deciding, or feeling forced, to leave. Several women related their decisions to migrate to the army too. More often, they positioned the desire to avoid conscription as a form of opposition against apartheid and as compromising the possibility of living closer to family. Here too there were notable exceptions. Sonja presented her partner's desire to avoid military service as compromising her ability to work towards change from inside South Africa.

Those who had attended military 'camps' framed the experience as extremely troubling without saying why. As opinions on the actions of the SAA were strongly divided, this silence may reflect a desire to leave open whether avoiding

additional military 'camps' was motivated by a fear of being harmed, an objection to being armed, or to acting in a way that now seems shameful. However, as suggested in the growing, but as yet limited, literature devoted to military service, another reason for these omissions is that serving in the South African Army confronted white South African men with their positions in maintaining the apartheid system (Batley, 2007; Cock, 1993, 1994; Thompson, 2006).

The chapter showed how histories of exile and oppression could be used to portray migration as integral to experiences of family as well as suggesting such histories could not alleviate the losses incurred through migrating. This was illustrated through an analysis of how alternate sites of identity, particularly Jewish identities, were used in claiming particular migratory and politicized positions. In relation to apartheid, these histories were used to assign to Jews a heightened sensitivity to the oppression of others. However, they were also used to frame Jewish and white South African identities as inextricably linked. In relation to life Britain, the position as a Jew was presented as offering automatic access to membership of certain British communities, British Jewry. However, local differences in traditional practice and the absence of an extended family also meant that membership of these communities was used to emphasize rather than minimize what had been lost. These differences attest to the need to take account of multiple and potentially contested aspects of identity to make sense of how migrants and their families dealt with the challenges posed by migration and their positions in relation to apartheid.

In the previous chapter I drew on Benjamin's concepts of repudiation and renunciation in discussing the racialization of white identities. The narratives discussed here suggest that these concepts are similarly applicable to theorizing the various ways in which migrants make sense of the consequences of migration for themselves and their families. For example, although the tendency to locate loss as belonging to the experience of another might reflect events in the 'real' world, as evident in Jack's description of his mother's request to him when ill, it may reflect a defence against acknowledging one's own sense of loss. In contrast, prioritizing one's own loss may represent a defence against recognizing the damaging consequences one's own decision has had for others. Other portrayals of migration are more reminiscent of what Benjamin calls renunciation: they involve an acknowledgement of loss in relation to certain aspects of experience and gains in relation to another. These concepts also appear to be useful to interpreting how the migrant participants made sense of their positions in relation to apartheid. Steven's description of his aunt's taken-for-granted racism suggests a repudiation of his own racism and projection of this onto her. In contrast, accounts that acknowledge that all white South Africans have been implicated in supporting and/or benefiting from racialized privilege fit with Benjamin's concept of renunciation: they locate what is feared or unpalatable in the self as well as the other.

As perceptions of the consequences for and views of non-migrants are integral to migrants' constructions of their own experience, the next chapter focuses on the views expressed by the non-migrant kin themselves.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Non-migrants' narratives**

This chapter explores how non-migrant white South Africans have made sense of the impact of an adult child or sibling's migration on their lives. Unlike their migrant kin, they continued to live in a country that had been structured along highly racialized lines after the political system that granted them and their family privileged status had been dismantled. Consequently, their accounts offer a vehicle for exploring how constructions of migration intersect with the ways in which white South Africans who remained in the country are coming to terms with the positions as white in a context in which the system that had granted them racialized privilege has been dismantled.

I have devoted this chapter to the position of non-migrants because I view migration as having had significant consequences for the relationships between myself, my brother who migrated to the United States and our non-migrant kin. However, until recently, non-migrants were rarely the focus of academic attention (Kofman, 2004; Papastergiades, 2000). Because many of the ideas that dominate the literature were formulated by migrants, the neglect may reflect these scholars' pre-occupation with adjusting to living in a new context, a desire to avoid facing the ways in which their decisions to leave affected the lives of the people who are frequently termed the 'left behind' and/or a reluctance to focus on

the positions of those who represent the lives they might have led had they decided to remain.

This neglect is evident in my uncertainty about how to speak about this positioning. The most commonly-used ways of denoting the opposite of migrant, emigrant and immigrant is to use the preface 'non'. However, as with the other commonly used term 'left behind', it ascribes lack in status and agency. An additional problem of 'non-migrant' is that it is reminiscent of how, under apartheid, 'non-white' was used to assign inferior status to those racialized as 'others'.

Globally, there is a growing tendency to use 'transnational' to denote non-migrants as well as migrants to demonstrate that migration affects those who do not migrate. This idea is reflected in Brah's diaspora space, in which she extends the notion of diasporic positions to include "the entanglement of genealogies of dispersal with those of 'staying put'" (1996, p181). However, the term transnational does not discriminate between the positions of the migrant and non-migrant. Consequently, there is risk that issues which are particular to non-migrants will continue to be obscured, such as the consequences of finding oneself caught up in a migration story that is not of one's own choosing.

This thesis uses 'non-migrant' for two reasons: it retains questions of agency as central to remaining, an issue of particular importance to a context that has been

dominated by a widely discredited oppressive regime, and it is less unwieldy than phrases like 'close family members who chose or feel forced to remain' and less emotive than 'left behind'.

As migration and mobility have become more commonplace, non-migrant populations have increased throughout the world. The development of transnational studies has led to increased interest in understanding how the experiences of migrants inform, and are informed by, the experiences of their non-migrant kin. Initially, most studies focused on issues like macro-economic determinants and remittances, leaving unanswered questions about how, when and under what circumstances those who remain suffer or benefit from migration. The focus has widened more recently, as is evident in publications devoted to exploring how family rituals and memories forge and sustain relationships between migrants and non-migrants (Bauer and Thompson, 2004; Chamberlain, 1997, 1999; Gardner and Grillo, 2002; Leydesdorff and Chamberlain, 2004; Olwig, 2002). These studies are particularly relevant as they draw attention to the importance of considering how constructions of migration intersect with racialized, ethnicized and gendered identity claims.

A small but growing number of publications attest to a newly emerging interest in the particular positions of non-migrants. However, with notable exceptions, most of the literature focuses on the positions of parents (Coles, 2001; Cohen, 1998; Miliades, 2002; van der Geest, Mul and Vermeulen, 2004), children and

spouses (Parrenas, 2002, 2003) or the family (Hadi, 1999). Where attention is paid to gender, the focus tends to be on the consequences for the caring responsibilities of mothers, grandmothers, daughters and wives. Other aspects of gender have as yet been under-researched and theorized (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). As a result, relatively little is known about the gains and vulnerabilities of this position, about whether non-migrants really feel 'left behind' and the implications of being positioned as someone who misses out on opportunities to go elsewhere (Nguyen, Toyota and Yeoh, 2005).

Moreover, transmigration and non-migrancy studies rarely consider the positions of siblings. This is problematic because ties with brothers and sisters are as much a part of identity and relationality as bonds with parents and key sites through which we learn to negotiate our similarities and differences with others (Coles, 2003; Dunn, 1993; Edwards, Hadfield, Lucey and Mauthner, 2007; Mitchell, 2003). If as Mitchell (2003) argues a sibling may represent a threat to the uniqueness of the individual, where a decision is regarded as highly significant, siblings' decisions are likely to have particularly important implications for constructions of self.

In seeking to address these gaps in theorizing and research, this chapter draws on narratives selected from interviews with nine non-migrants, five parents and four siblings. As with each of the data-analytic chapters, particular attention is paid to how these participants move between political and personal discourses.



Here too, access to Jewish identities, a position I and four of these participants share, is treated as a particular site for exploring how non-migrants negotiate contradictions between personal and canonical narratives pertaining to the family, migration and racialization. Attention is also paid to analyzing the intersection between movements across space and the life course so that, in common with the previous chapter, the analysis acts as a precursor to Chapter 7 which explores the meanings ascribed to encounters with the next generation and death.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first focuses on narratives that illustrate how continuities in identities have been preserved or restored in contexts of geographic dispersion. The second concentrates on those that frame migration as having disrupted anticipated experience in ways that have been problematic and difficult to transcend. In view of the particularly small sizes of these two groups, the chapter adopts a more case-centred approach than the other data-analytic chapters.

## **6.1 Narratives of continuity**

Participants appear to have constructed continuities in identity and relationships in two different ways. One approach privileges similarities and underplays the differences between non-migrant and migrant kin, and the other positions

migration as indicative of similarities or differences that pre-date decisions to migrate.

I discuss the first strategy by drawing on narratives selected from interviews with two parents, Max and Sarah, and the second by focusing on the narratives of two siblings, Heather and Greg. These strategies are not particular to parents or siblings, and participants do not adopt the same strategy throughout their accounts. However, structuring the chapter in this way allows for an analysis of how the identity claims that underpin narratives of migration and apartheid are informed by whether the relationship under discussion is with a child or sibling.

#### **6.1.1 Privileging similarities**

This section focuses primarily on Max's portrayals of migration. His wife died relatively recently and he has two children, a son in Britain and daughter in South Africa. I also refer to the account of Sarah, a woman whose three children live in Britain, and whose husband was ill at the time we met.

Both participants migrated to South Africa when they were about twenty and present migration as integral to their understanding of what it means to be a family. Max relates his migration to a need to escape growing anti-Semitism in Germany and Sarah to marrying a South African-born man. However, in each case, migration appears to have provided an opportunity to construct a more

comfortable position in relation to their family of origin. Max's interview begins with a question I ask all participants:

JA: How do you feel migration has influenced your lives - the lives of your children - the lives of your grandchildren?

Max: Well of course it has but I mean - I'm an emigrant myself.

JA: Can you tell me more?

Max: I must say this - I've always been keen for my children to *(long pause)* be mobile and not be *(longer pause)* carry some patriotic - chauvinistic baggage.

The interchange begins with my asking Max how migration has affected him, his children and grandchildren. He responds by framing the issue I raise as taken-for-granted, before introducing what he presents as more relevant that, like his son, he is an emigrant. This answer suggests an attempt to claim greater agency over telling his story, rebalance the power dynamics of our interchange and obscure the difference between non-migrants and migrants, me as well as his son. Introducing his own position as an emigrant allows Max to present himself as his son's role model, positioning him as agentic in his son's decision to leave. This reframing has the effect of avoiding or silencing discourses he does not want to address. It is illustrative of how, the ability "to imagine alternatives even in the presence of a clearly defined stimulus situation" (Jenkins, 2001, p353)

allows individuals to draw on a different discourse when faced with uncomfortable positionings in relation to one meaning system.

Max constructs a link between national belonging in relation to South Africa and Germany with the words “patriotic” and “chauvinistic”. This strategy obscures the difference between a context in which he and his family were potential victims and one where they were perpetrators or beneficiaries of racialized hatred. Although this may not be conscious, it seems aimed at refuting the need to account for the oppressive practices of the country that became his safe haven from the Nazis, while legitimating his son’s decision to leave.

However, Max’s comments are replete with pauses. It is difficult to know what this might represent. He continues by mentioning what is presented as an emerging discourse, a growing “great – um regret um” about leaving his mother and sisters in Nazi-dominated Germany. Consequently, these pauses may reflect moments when he is faced with loss and regret. Since he frames regret as a relatively new realization, it is possible that the combination of his wife’s death and distance from his son have exposed him to issues he had been unable, or unwilling, to consider before, the problematic consequences his migration might have had for his own non-migrant kin, particularly his mother.

Max bases his daughter's decision to remain in South Africa on her having less "self-esteem" than her brother, rather than presenting it as an indicator of wanting to live closer to and support her parents.

As with all participants, the meanings Max ascribes to migratory decisions emerge from a relational context. Elsewhere in his account there are suggestions that holding his son in higher esteem reflects a pattern that began well before migration took place. However, migration means that it is possible to relate his views of his children to whether they decided to leave or remain.

This tendency to hold migrants in higher esteem than non-migrants is evident in discussing migrations to and from other contexts as well. Max presents migrants in heroic terms, as "a little bit ahead of the people who live in the country" and having the "spunk" to abandon "aids and help". This suggests that prioritizing his own position as a migrant allows Max to project aspects of staying behind he finds unpalatable onto other non-migrants. In a society in which the dominant group have histories of migration and where many parents have migrated, there is unlikely to be a clear boundary between migration and staying put for the older generation. This history is also likely to mean that migration would be highly valued and regarded as heroic. However, it may add to the need to defend against the consequences of viewing one's self as someone who was left behind.

In discussing migrants, Max moves interchangeably between Jewish migrations from Germany and Eastern Europe and post-apartheid migrations of North Africans to South Africa. As with the narrative discussed above, this serves to downplay issues that might be particular to migrations from apartheid-based South Africa. Subsequent references to German aspects of identity suggest that the desire to minimize the significance of the particular context of migration is not confined to South Africa, as evident in discussing what was required of him before marrying a South African-born woman:

Max: My wife didn't want to – marry me while I still had German nationality – which was understandable.

This statement frames marriage as dependent on censoring German aspects of identity, suggesting that marrying a South African-born woman offered an opportunity to repudiate a positioning that was uncomfortable for him and/or his positioning in South Africa. It implies that, within the space of their marriage, he was at risk of being constructed as shameful. Max frames nationality as something he “had” and could dis-own, positioning a German identity as homogeneous and legalistic rather than embracing multiple ways of ‘being’ German. Although he proposes that his wife’s view “was understandable”, frequent pauses hint at the costs of censoring aspects of identity deemed to be unacceptable. Elsewhere Max says he started to read more about Germany and the “Third Reich” after his wife died. This suggests that her death released him to

engage with aspects of the past he had renounced before. However, this pattern is not particular to Max, as reflected in the growing number of publications devoted to Nazi Germany and a whole travel industry of his generation returning to visit the country of their birth.

Max returns to the costs of renouncing aspects of his past in a subsequent description of meeting his mother after the war. He says that she was “very much um upset that I had so much – changed going to the more easier-going South African lifestyle here”. It is impossible to know whether she did prioritize cultural markers in discussing how Max had changed while they were apart. However, focusing on lifestyle allows him to acknowledge change without introducing issues that might be more difficult to articulate.

There were other indications of how Max’s views of migration and the challenges it presents have changed over time. He says his son visited them more frequently when his wife was critically ill but frames these visits as supportive of his wife and as work-related. This stance allows him to position himself as a parent who is proud of his son’s achievement but is not needy himself. This pattern of minimizing changes that might otherwise seem to be problematic is also evident in discussing his grandchildren:

JA: Your grandchildren - how do you think their living elsewhere has kind of influenced how you've got to know them and your relationship with them?

Max: Their parents are very good. They've got pictures and 'who is this?' then 'that's Grandpa Max' and so on and they're made very much aware and they're very good both my daughter-in-law and my son are - although we're not together - keep – my (*long pause*) before when my wife was still alive - kept my (*long pause*) existence in front of them and so on - made sure that they knew of us and so on – and – so.

The question I ask takes for granted that migration affects relationships with, and knowledge of, grandchildren. Max refutes this by illustrating how family photographs can be used to enhance visual memories: they create a context for what Wang (2004) calls memory talk, for telling stories that developing enough understanding of one another to extend the boundaries of family relationships beyond the confines of the geographic locations in which they live. Despite presenting this narrative as an indication of successful accommodation to change, the hesitation that marks what is said suggests that repeating this story is not only aimed at confirming identities and relational continuity to others like me, but to Max too. However, because the exchange he describes relies on careful planning, on photographing and the commitment to send, show and discuss photographs, it is also an indicator of the difference between a relational



presence that is based on face-to-face interactions and remembered and/or largely imagined encounters.

Max mentions that his son and daughter-in-law are “very good” at keeping “my (*long pause*) existence in front of them”, indicating that the relationship with his grandchildren is bound up with his relationship with his son and daughter-in-law. This pattern is not confined to situations in which migration has taken place (Mueller and Elder, 2003). However, it supports Falicov’s (2006) proposal that migration forces parents who live apart from adult children to construct relationships with their children and grandchildren by piecing together the fragments they have of their lives. The narrative ends with an unfinished sentence in which Max presents his wife as central to relationships with his grandchildren. Although he does not link separations that relate to death with migration, mentioning his wife at this point suggests a parallel between holding on to memories of those who have died and live elsewhere. It also calls into question the continuation of relationships with his grandchildren without her, suggesting a gendered understanding of relating to grandchildren.

Like Max, Sarah aligns herself with her children in mentioning her own migration at the outset of her first interview. She minimizes the differences between their positions further by relating her children’s migration to employment opportunities, peer pressure and a desire to avoid military conscription. These factors serve to downplay the possibility that the children’s migration might have reflected a

desire for distance from their parents and/or the lifestyle of the country to which she had moved.

There are exceptions, as for example in saying that living apart from her children and grandchildren has meant “missing - a whole section of your life – really”. However, more frequently expressions of loss are minimized or pathologized. For example, Sarah presents activating and reactivating friendships and engaging in fulfilling work as her way to fill the gaps that resulted from her children’s migrations, rendering their migrations almost “irrelevant” to her life. She also indicates that advances in travel and communication have enabled her to support her children in times of need. As discussed in Chapter 7, her daughter Mary, another research participant, offers a different perspective. Despite her mother positioning their family lives as relatively unaffected by migration, she views migration as a turning point: it enabled her to claim a much needed distance from her parents and was integral to assuming greater responsibility for her own life.

Sarah focuses on her husband’s ill health in presenting migration as compounding the difficulties presented by aging. This focus seems to reflect actual differences in their health status. However, as with Max, it has the effect of underplaying how her needs and desires might have changed, positioning her as agentic, as someone who can cope without the assistance of adult children and/or is unwilling to burden them with her concerns. As Coles (2001) notes in his analysis of the experiences of non-migrant parents in Turkey, wanting one’s

children to succeed and wanting to share in their accomplishments may require non-migrant parents to adopt a defensive pattern to protect them and their children from exposure to sadness and disappointment. Cohen's (1998) analysis of the position of non-migrant parents in India offers an alternative interpretation, that such claims of independence might be an indication that non-migrant parents have no one else to care for them.

Despite the differences in the socio-political circumstances of the countries Max and Sarah chose to leave, both accounts illustrate how non-migrant parents can downplay feelings of loss arising from a child's migration by using their own histories to identify with their children. They show how letting go of the past can be framed as integral to adjusting to migration. They also illustrate how histories of migration can be used to claim a relatively marginal position in relation to the oppressive practices of the societies in which they live. In each case, age-related changes seem to have given them a greater understanding of what they had been unable or unwilling to consider before: the impact of their migration on their own families of origin. In Max's case, reduced access to the situations in which his identity had been grounded, namely his retirement and wife's death, seem to have increased his desire to reconnect with aspects of self he had chosen to disregard.

### 6.1.2 Privileging difference

Narratives from interviews with two non-migrant siblings, Heather and Greg, illustrate how the meanings ascribed to migration may relate to earlier negotiations of identity. Heather has a sister who moved to Britain, a brother who moved elsewhere and other siblings in South Africa. Greg has two siblings in Britain and others in South Africa. However, in each case they focus most of what they say on one migrant sibling. In Heather's case, this may be because she was asked about the consequences of migrations to Britain. However, as with most participants, their accounts suggest a particular investment in the relationships that are prioritized compared with those they say less about.

Heather begins by saying her sister Kate migrated at "a time in one's life when one is anyway free and floating". She uses abstract and generalizing terms like "space for self expression" and "evolve" to position emotional maturity as dependent on the space for self discovery, and migration as a form of individuation. Framing migration in this way downplays the possibility that the decision to leave reflected a politically-informed stance. Heather returns to individuation when asked about her parents, this time focusing on her migrant brother:

JA: Looking back – for your parents - what do you think this meant for them?

Heather: This whole – er this is quite an interesting thing I think – this – so – this whole sort of set that stayed behind all matured and changed and – and evolved – and we all – for the most part – can relate in a very adult way together. Then I see my siblings come back – or came back – certainly my brother over Christmas – and it's as if that (*long pause*) tape from the early years is instantly inserted into the video – and all the old dynamics are replayed and it's quite bizarre to watch. It stimulates sort of old behaviour in my parents – and these old conflicts and old dynamics immediately emerge – it's – it's astonishing.

My term “looking back” is aimed at encouraging Heather to reflect on her parents’ experience without implying that issues she had raised spontaneously were unimportant. It also introduces the idea that it might be possible to make sense of issues in the present that were not, or could not, be considered before.

Having portrayed Kate’s migration as a form of individuation, Heather uses the example of her brother to show how migration interferes with the possibility of creating an enduring change in family position. She frames face-to-face contact as central to learning to relate in a “very adult way”. The metaphor of a video tape is used to illustrate how past positionings are re-evoked each time her brother returns. Heather positions her brother’s actions as inevitable by using “old” to describe “behaviour”, “conflicts” and “dynamics”. In situations in which

migration has not taken place, there is often a tendency for family members to relate to one another in terms of the positions they had occupied in the past. However, she attributes the re-emergence of past dynamics to migration. Although she indicates that she was present at the time, she positions her brother as the cause of the difficulties that develop and herself as an observer who watches a “quite bizarre” and “astonishing” video”.

Heather locates their reunion in terms of an event that has cultural and religious significance. Coming together to mark such events has long been seen as a way for communities, family members and individuals to deal with the dialectics of change and continuity. However, her emphasis on the problematic nature of this reunion fits with the growing recognition that in the context of migration, reuniting to fulfil traditional rituals can heighten the sense of discontinuity (Gardner and Grillo, 2002). Because these reunions take place in a situation in which another separation is anticipated, Heather's description of brother's behaviour and her response to this may be a defence against the feelings of loss that would otherwise be triggered by reflecting on separating once more.

Heather also offers a more positive portrayal of other reunions, particularly of those with her sister. She presents her sister's engagement with a different society, and her nieces and nephews' experiences of life in London as having exposed her and her children to new ideas and understandings of the world. As discussed in Chapter 7, her reflections on the challenges of being a white parent

in post-apartheid South Africa suggest that despite problematizing her siblings' experiences, she has become increasingly ambivalent about her decision to remain. Consequently, problematizing the position of her migrant siblings may be a defence against identifying with the people who represent the decision she did not make.

Greg emphasizes the differences between himself and his migrant siblings for much of his account but unlike Heather, prioritizes the political over experiences of family. He begins by saying he has two siblings living in Britain:

JA: Gosh so - you've got two in in England - your brother and your sister.

Greg: Yes – yes – erm – they – they left erm – they really left without – they left because they didn't like what was going on – but they were relatively un-political people. I thought at the time that I was – I saw myself as being more radical people and more involved than they were and I wasn't going to leave – but they sort of saw themselves as being ordinary – decent people and the country was going to become a blood bath between extremists – erm – between black and white extremists – and they didn't see any place for themselves – and they left – erm – and interestingly they left fairly a-polit- - I thought they were quite apolitical people when they left but erm – erm – they landed up getting involved in

– in exile politics and so on in England – anti-apartheid movement and so on [...] I really think in some ways it was just er you know there are problems with people being in exile trying to deal with – but also trying to deal with being white South Africans who – erm – were no longer there – and being exposed to – to attitudes and media.

I had interviewed Greg's sister, Sonja, before meeting him. Consequently, my comment "Gosh" and reference to his having more than one sibling in Britain reflects illustrates the difficulties of ensuring that issues that emerge in the accounts of one family member do not inform engagement with another. It reflects embarrassment at forgetting what I view as important information.

Greg responds by indicating that he sees it as integral to understanding the meanings associated with migration. Whilst this might reflect his view, it may also be a way of gaining greater control over the interview, given that my response suggests that I view living apart from more than one family member as compounding the impact of migration on non-migrants' lives. Towards the end of his second interview, Greg introduces what appears to be an emerging discourse, that it might have been "better for me" had he and Sonja been able to "just see more of each other". This comment suggests prioritizing the political is a way of avoiding more personal feelings triggered by the interview.



The narrative positions Greg's decision to remain as the conscious, politically-informed choice of a "radical". He contrasts his own position with that of his migrant siblings by framing them as "apolitical" and "un-political." He emphasizes this by reframing what is presented as "apolitical" and "un-political" as maintaining the oppressive status quo. The heteroglossic meanings associated with 'decent' seem to imply that although protecting family from an anticipated "blood bath" is understandable, decency required looking beyond personal safety and assuming a more active stance against an oppressive regime.

Greg continues to polarize their positions by commenting on his siblings' anti-apartheid activities in Britain. The term "landed up" implies that their political involvement emerged from a 'longing to belong' (Hall, 1998; Probyn, 1993; 1996), rather than real political commitment: it was a way of warranting identity in a context in which the meanings ascribed to "being white South Africans" and migrants were problematic.

However, disruptions in narrating, changes in tense and comments like "I thought at the time" suggest a reworking of ideas about the past. Because Greg is in his mid-fifties, this shift may be a response to changes in the life course. However, as the country in which he had claimed a "radical" activist identity has undergone significant socio-political change, changes in the "attitudes and media" to which he is exposed may have challenged the meanings he too ascribes to "being a white South African".

Heather and Greg present much of what they say as certainties. Their portrayals may well relate to 'reality'. However, as with all accounts, they reflect a 'knowledge' that is situated in terms of particular relationships at a particular point in time. Amongst the consequences of prioritizing difference are that it has the effect of underplaying personal experiences of loss and disrupting identifications with the oppressive position. Nonetheless, in both cases there are indications of a reassessment of past views about migration and their siblings' positions. The first interview may have impelled this process: Heather called to cancel the second interview and Greg forgot about it. However, having said they had little to add, on agreeing to meet, both participants said more about what they had lost through living apart from their siblings and the challenges of "being a white South African" in a post-apartheid context.

## **6.2 Narratives of disruption**

The second part of this chapter focuses on narratives that portray an adult child or sibling's migration as having increasingly problematic consequences for anticipated identities and relationships. I address this issue by analyzing excerpts from interviews with three parents, Ruth and Isaac (a married couple) and Annette and two siblings, Heather and Alex. This allows for an analysis of what might be similar and different about the challenges migration presents to intergenerational and sibling relationships.

The first section focuses on disruptions to intergenerational care and the second on how migration can introduce or exacerbate differences that have been difficult to transcend. However, as evident in the first part of this chapter, this does not mean that I view the issues discussed here as generationally specific.

### **6.2.1 Disruption to anticipated intergenerational relationships**

As reflected in discussing Max and Sarah's accounts, all five non-migrant parents present migration as having compounded the challenges posed by aging. Like Max and Sarah, Annette, focuses on her husband's ill health while Ruth and Isaac focus on their own. Their positions are different in another way too: each of Ruth and Isaac's children has migrated but with the exception of one son, all Annette's children live in South Africa.

I have chosen to focus primarily on the accounts of Ruth and Isaac. I do not regard comparisons between individual accounts as a way of authenticating what participants say. However, because they were interviewed together, their accounts offers a framework for exploring how the views of one family member construct, and are constructed by, the issues another raises or leaves unsaid. Similarly, as their daughter Melanie participated in this research too, this focus allows for an analysis of the issues that non-migrants and migrants in the same family emphasize and downplay. Because like their daughter, Ruth and Isaac

and Melanie tend to prioritize the problematic consequences of migration, their accounts offer a framework for analyzing the subversive nature of 'trouble talk' (Wilce, 1998). In addition, as all three family members contextualize what they say in terms of their positions as Jews, their accounts allow for an analysis of the various ways in which Jewish positionings are used in constructing responses to apartheid, political change and living apart from close family members. For example, they show how the positioning as powerless, potential victim of religious oppression and/or relatively unsupported by family can be used to eschew the implicit positioning as white privileged.

Ruth begins by framing her children's migration as "totally devastating". Although she had prepared for anticipated changes in the life course by retraining and returning to paid employment, she felt ill-equipped to deal with the grief triggered by their migration. Isaac mentions changes in the life course too, saying he became more aware of loss after retiring. This suggests that Hammerton's (2004) finding that migrants' reduced access to employment-based networks increases awareness of what is lost as a result of migration is applicable to the positions of non-migrants. As I had just said my goodbyes to my own parents, one of whom was seriously ill, my engagement with their loss was infused by a personal understanding of the challenges families face when non-migrant parents retire, age and become increasingly vulnerable.

Isaac continues by saying that he and his wife avoided “passing judgement” on their children’s decisions to leave. He frames their decision as a protest against the treatment of “the poorer population - the underprivileged as they were called”. The shift from “poorer” to “underprivileged” and reference to the contingent nature of language suggest uncertainty about what is acceptable to say in the present. Support for their children’s migration is expressed in a stilted way. While it is impossible to know the cause of his hesitancy, the moral value he ascribes to their decision to migrate suggests it might have been experienced as a judgment about the lives he and his wife had lived.

Their daughter, Melanie, refers to judgement in a similarly obscure way. As discussed in Chapter 5, she uses the terms “price” and “dividend” in describing disruptions in the communication between her children and their grandparents. Although she does not explain she is implying, references to apartheid elsewhere in her account suggest that these words are used to denote the “price” and “dividend” that need to be paid for racialized privilege. It illustrates how apartheid needs to be taken into account in analyzing descriptions of family interactions even though she and her father might not mention it explicitly.

Isaac goes on to say that he and Ruth were mugged recently. Mentioning mugging at this point positions them as victims rather than perpetrators of aggression creates a link between migration, the dismantling of apartheid and their increased vulnerability. It suggests that, while migration might have allowed

his children to adopt a morally-valued stance, it exposed him and Ruth to increased levels of risk and having to make sense of living within a much altered socio-political system without their children's help.

Ruth and Isaac return repeatedly to a dilemma all five non-migrant parents raise: how life might have been different had they migrated and/or had their children remained in South Africa. Issues they regard as potential risks of migrating include becoming a burden to their children, losing their identities and financial constraints. However, advantages include the possibility of greater continuities in practical and emotional support and the chance of establishing a "normal" relationship with their children and grandchildren.

Ruth: And I kind of feel that they (*her grandchildren*) - they forget us between visits. That means a re-establishment each beginning - and it's a beginning again - and they've changed so much in the last year since you've seen them. You know - what Annie's favourite colour was last time you saw her, she hates this year and so gifts are impossible - and - erm - it's just almost an artificial situation. Everybody's on their best behaviour which isn't exactly normal.

Ruth positions migration as disrupting anticipated relationships between grandparents and grandchildren and highlights this by describing reunions as a

“re-establishment” and “beginning”. She emphasizes this further by using the example of a change in colour preference to demonstrate that gifts she selects for her grandchildren will always be out of synch with their current preferences. She also indicates that reunions are so constrained by attempts to accommodate to gaps in time that they are “almost [...] artificial”. The latter comment accords with proposals that a heightened desire to connect can lead to a censoring of aspects of self deemed unacceptable, resulting in unnatural connections with people (Miller and Stiver, 1991). Although the literature illustrates how gifts and remittances can help transnational subjects remain an emotional presence in contexts of dispersal (Chamberlain, 1997; Olwig, 2002), Ruth’s narrative implies that this is insufficient to make up for what is lost.

Ruth also problematizes some of the methods other non-migrant parents present as ways of remaining in contact with their children: letters, emails and telephone calls. This is exemplified in a description of how lighting candles on a Friday night evokes a sense of her children’s presence. Her portrayal suggests that her experience of this Jewish ritual is infused with considerable emotion and increases her desire for greater connection. However, because differences in time mean that this is impossible, it heightens her experience of loss, echoing proposals that in contexts of migration, traditional rituals can become a context for affirming discontinuities as well as continuities (Gardner and Grillo, 2002).

Isaac and Ruth are children of migrants rather than migrants themselves. Isaac describes his parents' migration as a shared experience: his father managed to bring "all the family [...] his brother [...] my mother's sister [...] the whole lot" from Lithuania to South Africa. The contrast between his parents' position and his experience of being left behind suggests an inability to replicate family scripts that are presented as more satisfactory. It is only when asked how his parents' experience informed his reaction to his children's decisions to leave that Isaac introduces aspects of their history he had not mentioned before: his parents' parents were "taken away" and killed in concentration camps. The decision to defer mentioning this suggests a reluctance to explicate exceptions to the notion of shared migration. However, it may also reflect an unwillingness to expose painful or unpalatable aspects of his parents' experience to research scrutiny and/or a disinclination to bring them to mind or to consider the possibility that their children's migration might have exposed him and his wife to parallel risks.

Having mentioned that his grandparents' lives were affected by anti-Semitism, Isaac introduces his own encounters of anti-Semitism. I use this to ask whether these histories meant he was "more aware of difference - or do you think you were less aware of difference?" My question draws on an academic understanding of the issues that have emerged in attempting to deconstruct 'the' Jewish response to apartheid (Marks, 2004). However, it highlights the complexities of drawing on insider experiences when participants and researchers 'share a platform' (Lentin, 2000; Stanley, 1993). A personal interest



in the intersection between Jewish and white South African probably accounts for my decision to ask how this positioning influenced his stance in relation to racialization. This is reflected in my decision to ask a question which offers two options, both of which prescribe what can be said.

Isaac responds by indicating that his experience of outsider positions increased his sensitivity to the oppression of others. However, he qualifies his answer by adding: "I don't think I ever – took advantage – at least I don't think I did - I'd hate to think I did". This hesitant qualifier and framing what he had said as thought rather than truth suggests a questioning of the view he presents. His comments seem to prompt Ruth to reflect on her understanding of her own position as white privileged. She introduces her response to a film that exposed her to the notion that all white South African citizens were implicated in maintaining racialized oppression:

Ruth: What I'm quite ashamed of is that (*long pause*) I might have blanked out on the – atrocities that were perpetrated in the prisons and the questioning and the Special Police and everything.

Ruth pauses as she explains that she is ashamed she "blanked out" about the crimes committed in the name of apartheid, before moving on to focus on those responsible for the "atrocities". The first part of her statement implies an owning of agency. However, the second indicates that blanking out did not reflect a

conscious unwillingness to see what was unpalatable but the extent to which she had been caught up in a system that was not of her choosing. Ruth and Isaac continue to contest their positions. For example, Isaac contrasts their stance with people he sees as more supportive of apartheid and Ruth responds by comparing herself to those who were actively engaged in opposing apartheid. These interchanges suggest that their couple relationship represents a site in which they feel comfortable and/or a pressure to question past actions and attitudes.

Annette offers a different perspective. Like Ruth, she positions migration as limiting the relationship grandparents can have with grandchildren, in her case by comparing her involvement in the lives of her South African and English grandchildren. Nonetheless, greater emphasis is placed on her role as a carer of a disabled husband. There are suggestions that her son's unavailability at times of increased vulnerability, such as since her husband became ill, has been particularly challenging. However, she tends to minimize or cover up her sadness and disappointment. She becomes tearful on two occasions during the interview, the first time explaining that the tears were because her contact lens had slipped and the second because of a need to discard chewing gum. Since this process of covering up sadness occurs in an interview with someone who, like her son, has left her own parents in South Africa, it suggests a response to an imagined conversation with her own child.

Although Annette mentions changes in the meanings ascribed to whiteness, there is little indication that it has led her to question her own behaviour and attitude. Instead, she positions others, particularly her husband, as more racist than herself. As discussed in Chapter 4, she calls the man she employed to care for her home and children a “houseboy” but says this word is no longer “in”. This supports the proposition that despite requiring white South Africans to censor sentiments previously deemed acceptable, dismantling apartheid may not have led to a change in views (Billig, 1999).

These excerpts suggest a link between prior encounters of migration and responses to an adult child's migration. The parents who had themselves migrated tended to underplay loss in discussing prior migrations as well as their responses to their children's migration. Two of parents whose parents had migrated prioritized loss for much of their account, a pattern I return in the next section when discussing the account of Sandra, the daughter of a woman who was forced to flee her country to escape the Nazis. However, as discussed earlier, one aspect of identity cannot account for responses to migration. Although Annette one of her parents had also left her country of origin under troubling circumstances, for most of her account, she downplays rather than emphasizes loss. However, unlike Ruth and Isaac, several of her children continue to live in South Africa.

### 6.2.2 Disruption to anticipated sibling relationships

Alex is the younger sibling of Charlie, a participant mentioned in the previous chapter. Sandra is the eldest of four children, two of whom live in Britain and another, like herself, lives in South Africa. While Alex positions migration as having exacerbated prior relational differences, Sandra positions it as introducing differences that have been difficult to transcend.

Alex begins by saying that his brother Charlie left at “quite a difficult time”, a time when his parents were facing considerable difficulties (*details omitted to preserve confidentiality*). As he seems uncertain how to proceed, I remind him that the interviews are confidential and that, although I interviewed his brother, I am interested in his own views on migration. He responds by positioning migration as a site of ongoing loss. He explains that his loss was particularly “*huge*” because they had been sent to different schools as children. Consequently, migration meant that they had little chance to recapture the intimacy of their earlier relationship.

Alex continues by expressing his “sorrow and quite a bit of resentment that he (*Charlie*) left and wasn’t here as a bigger brother to help me through many things.” As he uses relatively abstract terms elsewhere in his account, “*huge*” and “bigger brother” suggest that the loss he expresses reflects the longing of a much

younger person. These opening comments position Charlie as the abandoner and Alex as abandoned: they frame Charlie, a brother he later calls the “much preferred son”, as a valued resource, without any indication that he, Alex, might be important to Charlie too. He then says:

Alex: And I think I've denied it for so long - you know - the impact on the family - the resentment that he *hasn't* been here to help - you know aged parents through difficulties – um - my mother's *really* ill at the moment and um - I feel that - I think he's got his own life and he's married and that he doesn't realize the impact it has on me and the *strain* it is on me although they've just been out here - and helped a little bit - but I always feel it's not enough (*laughs*) and they should be compensating more – for - their huge absences.

The narrative positions migration as forcing Alex to assume primary responsibility for caring for their increasingly frail parents. It accords with Giles and Mu's (2005) research amongst non-migrants in rural China. They found that younger adults are less likely to work as migrants when a parent is ill unless another sibling is available to care for their parents.

The disparities in the efforts he and his brother put in to caring for their parents may well relate to material differences. However, the shift to what Alex frames

as rightful resentment seems aimed at reworking the troubled subject positioning created by recounting memories of his “*huge loss*”. Saying that their mother was “*really ill*” suggests that Charlie’s relative inaction reflects an unwillingness, rather than inability, to recognize the burden Alex faces. Alex emphasizes the disparities in their positions by using “my” rather than “our” mother, mentioning the difference in their marital status, and framing Charlie’s support as “*not enough*”. His laughter suggests an appeal for recognition of the unfairness of a situation in which, regardless of what he does, it will not be “*enough*” to alter his parents’ perceptions of the “much preferred son”.

Alex continues to prioritize their differences in saying that, despite achieving “success in many many” areas of life, he becomes a “whingeing little boy” when they meet, suggesting the response of a child appealing for support. It is at this point that he introduces apartheid by stating that the reason he has not introduced Charlie to his friends is because he would be critical of those who “might not be too politically correct”:

Alex: I think I’ve got this huge big brother memory of him that would just come down so hard on anyone who – in any way was – racist or stereotyped people or anything like that.

Foucault (1980) proposed that one of the consequences of feeling observed is that the standards the observers are understood to hold become internalized as

the standards the observed adopt in monitoring their own behaviour. Although Alex's comment relates to the racism of others, it implies a personal sense of surveillance, framing Alex as the object of an idealized brother's scrutiny that could align him with those deemed racist.

The sense that his way of life might be seen as less moral than his brother's is also evident in the meanings Alex attributes to his decision to remain in South Africa. He frames his brother as adopting a heroically anti-apartheid stance and himself as cowardly in describing migration as a prospect that was "too daunting" for him. There are indications that his view of how they have each dealt with the legacy of racialization has changed. He describes Charlie as out of touch with current cross-racialized patterns of relating by contrasting the relationship he has established with black colleagues and Charlie's discomfort in engaging with the domestic worker he (Alex) employs. However, the example he uses highlights the importance of taking account of the triadic relationship between a white mother, black nanny and white child and how racialization intersects with other forms of privilege, such as class. In his account, Charlie framed discomfort with the way in which members of his extended family treated domestic workers as part of his reason for migrating. This suggests that although Charlie's response may reflect uncertainty of how to operate in a post-apartheid context, it may also be about a fear of being drawn back into a relationship that mirrors earlier experiences.

The hesitancy and pauses that mark narratives in which Alex cast himself more favourably than his brother suggest ambivalence about warranting such a claim. As discussions about a change in positions are prefaced by expressions of longing for Charlie, difficulties in owning more positive aspects of identity may not only relate to how he is positioned by others, but to ambivalence about disrupting his own internalized image of an idealized older brother.

The only time Alex positions their sense of loss as shared is in discussing journeys when “you just want to weep - and you *do* weep - and they weep” about what has been “left unsaid”. Several other participants mention the airport and flights between South Africa and Britain in discussing the relational implications of migration. This echoes Clifford’s (1997) claim that, instead of focusing on villages, anthropologists should focus on airports when studying migratory experiences. Alex’s description of journeys to and from the airport condenses the symbolism of migration and subsequent experiences of leaving and returning. Moreover, his use of the generalizing “you” suggests a desire to position his experience of being unable to resolve the “unsaid” as part of a collective experience that affects others who live apart from close family, including me.

Alex does not say what is “left unsaid”. However, the heteroglossic nature of the words he uses to frame Charlie as a figure of potential support and racialized scrutiny, “bigger brother”, suggest that the “unsaid” relates to how apartheid interpenetrated their relationship. Despite this, references to a shared loss



indicate that even though much remains “unsaid”, loss has the power to unite as well as separate. In his account, Charlie mentions his ongoing sense of “guilt” about the difficulties his migration presented for Alex. He also alludes to a growing questioning about his own racism. These parallels suggest that, even though these brothers emphasize difference, they share an understanding of what informs their relationship and of how they are positioned.

Unlike Alex, Sandra frames migration as introducing, rather than exacerbating, difference. She begins by saying that migration means that “the family unit gets totally – gets broken”. She relates her view to her mother’s experience of having to flee the country of her birth in Eastern Europe (*name omitted to preserve confidentiality*) without realizing that she would never see her family again. Later, she relates her mother’s history and Jewish legacies of oppression and exile to her strong identification with Israel. Although there is no reference to apartheid, by opening her account in this way, Sandra frames her sense of identity in terms that transcend apartheid-based racialized constructions of identity. She ends this first narrative by saying she is “the first - um the first of her family (*long pause*) so um - the family I come from - I’m the eldest of four”, suggesting she feels entrusted with particular responsibility for helping her mother to reconstruct “her family” after the war.

Repeated references to her mother’s past suggest that her childhood was dominated by what Hirsch (1999) calls ‘postmemories’, by the memories she

constructed from real and imagined stories about her mother. This is exemplified in a description of how her mother refused to acknowledge that she, Sandra, might be depressed because her experiences were not comparable to those of Holocaust victims. She explains that, although her mother encouraged her to read books about the Holocaust that were not intended for young children, she would not discuss her own experience or help Sandra make sense of what she had read. The disparity between celebrating her mother's heroism and ability to transcend loss and the loss that dominates portrayals of her own experience, suggests that Sandra was left holding on to the pain her mother could not face.

It is widely recognized that those who survive traumatic experiences are often left with guilt about what it means to survive when others do not, and that this 'survivor guilt' can be transmitted to children through gaps and nuances in speech (Apfelbaum, 2001; Hoffman, 2004; Kaslow, 1995; Rosenthal, 1993, 1998; Rustin, 1988). Although Sandra relates her decision to stay in South Africa to factors like employment opportunities, repeated references to her mother's experience suggests that it was also informed by a desire to avoid her mother having to face her family being "totally [...] broken" again.

Despite referring to her position as the eldest at the start of her first interview, Sandra minimizes the differences between herself and her siblings for much of her account. She positions her family as "unusual" because of the way in which she and her migrant siblings have remained involved in one another's lives. This

is illustrated in descriptions of their readiness to come to South Africa at times of crisis. These illustrations suggest that times of crisis allow her and her migrant siblings to actualize a pattern of connection that mirrors an idealized view of how life might have been had migration not taken place.

Sandra alludes to differences in the positions of migrants and non-migrants in stating that her decision to remain in South Africa enabled her to construct relationships that are less dominated by racism. However, although she presents her siblings' migration as a form of opposition to apartheid, she refutes the possibility that migration signified a more politicized response to apartheid than her own. The emphasis on shared values is evident in the following statement:

Sandra: I think had there been no apartheid – definitely David (*a migrant brother*) would have been here – he's – I think he's an African – and he loves the country.

This statement refutes the possibility that migration signified a dis-identification with family or country: it frames leaving the country as beyond David's control. The terms "African" and "country" refer to geographic locations of identity. They reflect Steyn's (2001) proposal that expressions of love for the country and its landscape allowed white South Africans to frame belonging in terms that transcend the racialized constructions that dominate the contexts in which they live. Despite this, her statement alludes to a love that is bound up with apartheid:

the “country” under discussion is where “African” signified membership of an inferior racialized grouping.

As evident in Max’s comments about his daughter, Sandra’s account attests to the importance of interrogating how non-migrants position themselves in relation to other non-migrant family. Whilst descriptions of her migrant siblings are dominated by claims of similarities, when asked about a sibling whom she had omitted to discuss, her non-migrant sister, she emphasizes difference. She pauses, mentions the concrete detail of their different ages and describes her family as “interesting” because of her sister is part of it before pausing once more. This suggests that that age is not all that divides these sisters. On being asked to continue she says:

Sandra: *(speaking rapidly)* Um - she *(Brenda)* is seen as a sort of spoilt - kid – that always got what she wanted - you know *(pause)* she’s turned into a really *fabulous young woman*. Um - and we did a brave thing about - oh *many many many* years ago. David was still living here um - she was – um and *married* him - they got married um - she had at the time was having an affair with a *(mentions a religious affiliation associated with non-white status)* and – my - er it wasn’t him it was the way she was doing it - and my brothers came here one night finding - wanting to find my husband and to go and ‘*donner*’ *(beat)* him up. Anyway we

decided that that was ridiculous and we went - the four of us - to go a therapist and thrashed it out which was quite a brave thing to do for four siblings - but it was a great thing to do because we got all the - nonsense out of it.

The validity of the phrase, "*fabulous young woman*", is refuted by introducing the discourse of misdemeanour: Brenda is described as someone "spoilt" who "always got what she wanted" and her relationship with the man who became her husband is described as an "affair". As Billig (1991) suggests, portraying behaviour as a reaction to misdemeanour rather than racialized prejudice allows one to distinguish between the rationality of the self and the irrationality of the prejudiced. It enables Sandra to justify 'othering' Brenda and using words like "brave" to describe her own, and the rest of her family's, response.

The narrative positions Sandra's relationship with Brenda as a site in which she was confronted with how experience of family had been 'interpellated' (Althusser, 1971) through the discourses of apartheid. As both sisters live in South Africa, the differences in their positions illustrate how living in the same context and exposure to certain racialized discourses do not determine the subject positions family members adopt. They show how feelings towards a sibling may be infused with the discomfort about one's own positioning in relation to apartheid.

As reflected in the previous two chapters, Sandra's narrative illustrates how the heteroglossic nature of language allows for the possibility of introducing racialized categories and racism without using the words black, white or racism. Under apartheid, the religious affiliation she mentions signified non-white status. Similarly, "*donner*", an Afrikaans word that translates as attack, frames Afrikaners as the primary and violent agents of racism. Sandra's conscious, or perhaps unconscious, language choice is likely to relate to an assumption that, in speaking to a white South African, she could introduce categorization and claims to agency which relate to apartheid implicitly. Because this narrative relates to experiences that remain troubling to her, using words that people who are not South African are unlikely to know suggests an appeal for understanding from someone with a similar history of white privilege.

Later, she positions Brenda's choice of partner as a site that confronted her with one of the differences between her own position and that of her migrant siblings. Unlike her and the rest of her parents, Sandra's migrant siblings have not had to "*deal*" with the meanings ascribed to a cross-racialized relationship in a country in which the system of racialized categorization that dominated their lives has been discredited.

Alex and Sandra mention the advantages of deciding to remain in South Africa as well. Remaining enabled them to remain actively engaged with their non-migrant parents and establish relationships that are less informed by racism than

seemed possible before. However, their accounts also reflect ongoing difficulties in dealing with the consequences of reaching a decision that is different to that of their non-migrant kin. These troubled subject positions seem to be bound up with family dynamics that pre-date migration. However, they also appear to relate to the multiple and often contested meanings that they and others ascribed to decisions to remain in South Africa and adjusting to living apart from highly-significant family members.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In describing how their lives had been affected by a child or siblings' migration, the five parents and four siblings I interviewed spoke about the pain of separations, regrets, disappointments and a sense of being 'left behind'. They also presented stories that showed pride in their migrant family members, satisfaction with their own lives and acceptance of the changes that had emerged from another family member's choice rather than their own.

There were many overlaps between the issues raised by the migrant and non-migrant participants. As with migrants, experiences of migration seem to have been constructed through experiences of family. Similarly, regardless of whether apartheid was mentioned or not, it appears to have informed constructions of family and the ascribed to leaving and remaining in apartheid-based South Africa. Here too, while some participants tended to frame the consequences of

migration in one way, they all varied the extent to which losses were emphasized or downplayed during the course of narrating.

As with migrants, non-migrants used three main strategies in portraying their accounts. They included framing migration as leading to problematic consequences for self and/or other family members, as a positive opportunity for change and as having posed levels of disruption that have been relatively easy to transcend. However, non-migrants were less likely to say that migration offered a chance to construct a more comfortable position in relation to their family. Where this idea was expressed, as reflected in a quote from Heather's account, it was more frequently used in relation to the position of migrants and in most cases, to pathologize the need to resort to migration in order to develop a different relationship with one's parents. In some cases, a siblings' migration was presented as allowing non-migrant siblings to reposition themselves in relation to their family. However, as reflected in Alex's account of his idealized "bigger brother", more often newer identity claims were regarded as less authentic than the old.

A similar range of factors emerged as important when considering what might contribute to privileging certain aspects of migration and underplaying others. They included positions in the life course, family dynamics that pre-date migration, whether participants were referring to intergenerational or sibling



relationships, gender, access to alternative sites of cultural or ethnic identification and my own engagement with what was being said.

Although the chapter illustrated the importance of recognizing that the challenges presented by the migration of an adult child or sibling are different, it demonstrated that responses to these challenges need not be similar. For example, for much of their accounts, Max and Sarah presented migration as having caused relatively little disruption of their lives. Like the other three non-migrant parents, they described migration as compounding the challenges posed by aging. However, they positioned their partners and not themselves as needy. In contrast, although Ruth and Isaac mentioned some of the struggles their children had faced, greater emphasis was placed on their own situation, particularly the challenges of coming to terms with aging without the proximal support of an adult child.

Amongst the differences between these four parents is that Max and Sarah left their parents and country of birth under troubling circumstances and seem to have dealt with the losses posed by their children's migration and their own by repudiating the losses they had incurred. In Ruth and Isaac's case, it was their parents, rather than they, who migrated under troubling circumstances. The loss that dominates their accounts suggests that their experience of their children's migrations has been informed by their own childhood difficulties in making sense of their parents' migration and of a past their parents could not contain. These

differences suggest a link between histories of migration and migrations from South Africa. However, Annette's account illustrates the need to avoid viewing any one factor as determining of responses to migration. Although it was one of her parents, her mother, who was a migrant and not herself, she underplays loss when reflecting on the consequences of migration and her own experience of aging. Another aspect of her experience is that, unlike Ruth and Isaac, the rest of her children continued to live in South Africa. .

The importance of taking account of multiple aspects of identity is also reflected in the ways in which Jewish histories of exile and oppression were used and referenced. Max draws on these histories in framing migration as integral to what it means to be a Jewish family. However, in common with a non-migrant sibling Sandra, Ruth and Isaac draw on different aspects of these same histories to highlight the need for families to stay together.

Some seem to have dealt with the challenges posed by reaching a different decision to their siblings by highlighting their differences and others by downplaying difference. As reflected in Sandra's discussions about her brother David, where sibling accounts suggested a positive identification with the migrant, the need to rework how relationships and identities had been affected by migration seemed to be particularly strong. However, where earlier dynamics were portrayed as more problematic, differences in positions of migrancy were

more likely to be framed as indicative of differences that were unrelated to migration.

Here too, Benjamin's (1998) interpretation of othering offers a way of conceptualizing non-migrants' responses to the disruption between their anticipated and experienced lives. Max's account showed how it was possible to frame other white South Africans as more supportive of apartheid than oneself and position family relationships as operating outside of the racism that dominated the country during apartheid. This pattern reflects what Benjamin calls repudiation: it involves projecting what is uncomfortable onto another. Other excerpts were more reminiscent of renunciation. Sandra's description of her response to her sister's decision to marry someone classified non-white, reflects a greater acknowledgement of her own position in relation to what she found difficult to acknowledge: her own racism and the racism that had infused her own family.

As discussed in Chapter 2, despite increased interest in the positions of non-migrants, few scholars have focused their attention on comparing the characteristics of migrants and non-migrants. Those who have addressed this difference suggest that migrants and non-migrants are differently positioned in relation to transnational moralities, do not enjoy equal access to information in the transnational field and have asymmetrical access to various resources (Carling, 2005). Falicov (1998) alludes to the moral meanings ascribed to these

different positions, arguing that the migration of a close relative requires non-migrants to rework their sense of agency and identity in response to a decision that was not of their own making. This may explain some of the differences between the identity claims of these migrants and non-migrants.

However, the highly racialized nature of the country means that some of the meanings ascribed to non-migrancy are particular to South Africa. Unlike their migrant kin, non-migrants were required to reconstruct their sense of identity and agency in a country that is attempting to balance a commitment to redressing the consequences of racialized privilege with efforts to construct a sense of “we” out of what was previously a racialized “us” and “them” (Schaap, 2003). This may explain why non-migrants seemed more inclined to refer to the dismantling of apartheid in justifying their decisions to stay, even though some of them referred to apartheid in more obscure ways. It may account for why some, like Greg, refuted the idea that it had been necessary for their siblings to leave South Africa in order to change their positions in relation to apartheid and argued that it would have been more effective to work towards change from within the country.

These findings highlight the importance of paying more attention to understanding the challenges presented by deciding or feeling forced to remain when a close relative migrates. They indicate that, although the experiences of non-migrants might be very different, the migration of a close relative, in this case an adult child or sibling, means that non-migrants, like their migrant kin, need to

reconstruct identities and relationships in relation to an 'imaginary geography' (Said, 1990) that is markedly different to what had been anticipated. As reflected in discussing the accounts of the migrant participants, there were indications of a move reassessing how they had been positioned in relation to family and/or apartheid.

With this in mind, the following chapter focuses on two sites that have the potential to confront migrants and their non-migrant kin with issues they had been unable or unable to consider before: real and imagined encounters with the next generation and death.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Real and imagined encounters with the next generation and death**

This chapter treats real and imagined encounters with the next generation and with death as points at which white South African migrants and their families are forced to reflect on their past understandings of the consequences of living apart from close family and the positions they adopted in relation to apartheid.

The decision to focus on these encounters was not predetermined. It arose as the research unfolded and I began to realize that few participants mentioned relationships with the next generation when asked how their families' experiences had been affected by migration. As the research is predicated on the understanding that the stories that remain hidden and untold are as integral to constructions of self, family and other as those that are told, I was particularly interested in making sense of the relationships these participants seemed to avoid discussing. In contrast, although I did not ask about death, it was mentioned spontaneously by almost every participant.

One reason for the significance associated with these encounters is age. As discussed previously, restricting the sample to migrations that took place during

apartheid meant that the migrants and their non-migrant siblings were approaching 50 or older, which is close to the ages their parents were when these migrations took place. Their age is also likely to mean they will have experienced, or be preparing for, both increased separations in relation to their own children and the death of a parent or other close family member.

The decision to focus on these two aspects of family life was also informed by my clinical experience, personal experience of migration and an understanding of the academic literature. My work as a family psychotherapist in Britain and post-war Kosovo has left me with the impression that, in traumatic circumstances, children are often invested with holding on to memories and imaginings parents cannot contain (Altschuler, 2002; Altschuler, Agnoni, Halitaj and Jasiki, 2002). It increased my understanding of challenges people face in coming to terms with death when migration means that it is difficult to fulfil the traditional rituals they associate with death or are unable to visit a place that signifies the remembered presence of those whom they had shared a common history. The socio-political issues that dominate present-day Kosovo and apartheid-based South Africa are markedly different. However, work in Kosovo confirmed my sense that when a country is highly politicized, family relationships can be used metonymically to represent identification with the country.

The decision relates to a more personal interest too. My own experience of migration involved leaving my parents and, at that point, all three of my siblings.

As such, the narratives I heard resonated with personal concerns about the consequences of living in a two-generational family, in which much of the 'memory talk' (Wang, 2004) that I have shared with my children reflects life as part of a wider family network. My son and daughter mentioned very different issues when asked how migration had influenced their sense of family: my son talked of feeling "rooted in both places" and my daughter of how, particularly when younger, visiting South Africa involved meeting people of "my blood but not of my life".

Participants' reflections of death resonated with my own encounters of death as well. Migration seemed to heighten my sense of impending death, as each time I parted from my parents I was unsure whether I would see them again. When my father passed away, it seemed to emphasize the importance of my family and me coming together to mark his death. His funeral offered us a chance to reaffirm our sense of family and assert a sense of belonging that is rooted in South Africa and our home town in particular. However, we were forced to arrange the date of the funeral and consecration of the grave around the fact that our family spans more than one geographic locality. His death also left me wondering how my relationship with the country might change when neither of my parents is alive.

To explore the identity claims that underpin accounts of these two sites the chapter is divided into two parts, the first focusing on encounters with the next generation and the second on death. Although it involves an analysis of excerpts



that are particularly illustrative of shifts in understanding, as in the previous three chapters, the ideas I present are informed by analyzing the accounts of all twenty participants and my own engagement with the data. Because the research was confined to people with first-hand experience of living under apartheid, the children of white South African migrants were not interviewed. Therefore any reporting on what the next generation think or have said is a reflection of the impressions of their migrant parents or non-migrant grandparents, aunts and uncles.

## **7.1 Encounters with the next generation**

The first part of this chapter illustrates how encounters with the next generation can force migrants and non-migrants to reconsider the consequences of living apart from close family and positionings in relation to apartheid.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, this research is predicated on the understanding that relationships between parents and children have unique symbolic importance for both parties (Bowlby, 1980; Gorrell Barnes, 1998; Klein, 1975; Minuchin, 1974). This view is supported by research and theorizing which indicate that investment in parent-child relationships evolves throughout life course and that relationships are affected by the social norms and interpretive schema of the societies in which people live (Benjamin, 1993; Fonagy, Gergely,

Jurist and Target, 2004; Fulmer, 1999; Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 1998; Gorrell Barnes, 1998; Hernandez and McGoldrick, 1999; Stern, 1985).

Erickson's (1985) concept of generativity', the idea that in middle adulthood people tend to experience increased concern for and commitment towards one's children, offers a way of understanding the importance attached to conversations with the next generation. It is used to signify a desire to invest oneself in forms of life and work that will outlive the self and achieve a form of symbolic immortality. Erikson's stage-based model fails to take account of the particularity of human development or how investment in maintaining solidarity across the generations varies according to such factors as family dynamics, cultural norms and age (Mueller and Elder, 3003; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). However, it offers a way of interpreting the finding that younger adults tend to show more investment in personal autonomy and older adults in hopes and dreams for the next generation (Olivieri and Reiss, 1987; Putney and Bengston, 2001).

To date, relatively little attention has been paid to analyzing responses to changes in the life course in contexts of migration. However, the literature that has been published suggests that investment in the next generation tends to increase in contexts of migration (Falicov, 2005; Gardner, 2002; Gshur and Okun, 2003; Rothbaum and Morelli, 2000). It indicates that in situations of migrancy, socialization and social reproduction take place in relation to at least two social and cultural contexts (Chamberlain, 1997; Levitt and Jaworski, 2007;

Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). For example, the clinical literature suggests that parents' attachments to their countries of birth can recruit children into idealized and denigrated constructions of their parents' countries and politics even though children's attachments might not mirror those of their parents. It indicates that where migrant parents find it particularly difficult to separate from the country of their birth, they are likely to work through separation issues in relationships with their children (Falicov, 1998; Koplow and Messinger, 1990).

To explore the identity claims that underpin constructions of encounters with the next generation, this first part of the chapter begins by illustrating how Mary son's longing for greater contact with her parents forced her to reconsider the value she had previously ascribed to living apart from them. This is followed by drawing on excerpts from interviews with two other migrants, Jack and Rachael, and a non-migrant, Heather, that show how encounters with the next generation situations can lead migrant and non-migrant white South Africans to reassess how they had understood their positions in relation to apartheid.

### **7.1.1 On living apart from close family**

In common with most migrant participants, Mary begins by explaining her reasons for migrating. She mentions her desire to escape her position as white privileged, reluctance to engage more actively in opposing apartheid and the migration of many of her peers. However, she also indicates that apartheid gave

her an excuse to claim a much needed distance from her parents, a distance that allowed her to assume greater responsibility for her life than seemed feasible before.

At a later point, Mary constructs a link between the fact that she and her siblings have “*settled – (quieter)* thousands of miles away from my parents” and her mother’s position as a migrant. She does explain what she means by linking these aspects of experience but her comment reflects proposals that a parent’s migration may become a model their children choose to follow (Chamberlain, 1997; Levitt and Jaworski, 2007). This seems to be particularly pertinent in Mary’s case. She and her siblings chose to move to a country with which they had long been connected, Britain, the country their mother chosen to leave and which is likely to have been a part of their identification with her.

However, repeated reference to the need to move away from her parents, particularly her mother, in order to become more independent suggests that her mother’s position as a migrant meant that her investment in her children felt particularly burdensome. Mary says far less about her father. When she does she becomes tearful before alluding to how migration signalled the end of the chance to become closer to him. Consequently, framing migration as a much needed opportunity for change might not only relate to a desire for distance from her mother but a way of dealing with longing for a greater connection with her father.

Mary continues by moving between her positions as migrant and the daughter of a migrant:

Mary: (*Speaks as if telling a story*) I think the thing that's interesting about this moving around is that it cuts you off from - your relatives or your extended family you know so like – say for instance Ned *doesn't* have grandparents around which is kind of like sort of when you (*deliberately*) have *children* it's a *time* when you can *really do* with them. And - the kids can really do with them and and - you know - it's it's a kind of – it's a kind of *knitting point* in a family I think so like you move away from your parents and then when you have kids there is this kind of - *common ground* again which is a child and that that sort of that support structure goes and um - so – w-we grew up in a world where we have very few relatives and - and now - our kids in a way are the *same*.

The narrative positions parenting as forcing Mary to reassess the value she had previously ascribed to living apart from her parents. The phrase “cuts you off” problematizes the consequences of living apart from close family. Mary focuses on the uchronic (Portelli, 1999, 2002) in positioning migration as disrupting the taken-for-granted manner in which intergenerational relationships are conducted. Migration is presented as interfering with the ways in which relationships

between grandparents and grandchildren help adult children and their parents learn to relate differently.

Mary uses a story-telling genre and depersonalized and generalizing terms like “interesting”, “you”, “your”, “relatives” and “extended family” in constructing her views as part of a collective discourse. Although she continues to use the second person “you” after mentioning her son’s name, the pace becomes more deliberate. This suggests that she remains troubled by what she presents as well-worn. Mary ends with the emphatic “*same*” and drawing a parallel between her son’s experience and her own. Her use of emphasis indicates that, despite wanting to construct a different experience for her son, she can see that certain aspects of her son’s experience replicate her own. It suggests that reflecting on her son’s experience has led her to recognize that there is a great deal she and her mother share. Half way through the second interview, Mary returns to this issue:

Mary: (*slowly*) Um but I think he (*Ned*) - he feels the *absence* of my parents *a lot* - um and I think he - when he goes to South Africa - he there’s a sort of - sense of - of kind of *belonging or continuity* that he - he likes. You know he’s sort of is interested in things that we’re not terribly interested in (*long pause*) all my parents have to say about other relatives and these bits and pieces and their relics and stuff and you think – oh! Shove it you

know - but he loves that sort of thing. It sort of means - I think it means quite a lot to him.

The narrative positions Mary's son as looking to her parents to fill his 'longing to belong' (Probyn, 1996). The increase in volume, extreme case formulation and repetition reflect the significance she attaches to her son's longing for the "kind of *belonging or continuity*" she had sought to escape. Her exclamation "shove it" and use of description of the terms "relics and stuff" to describe the objects her parents share with her son suggest a humorous underplaying of what they represent for her son. However, she ends by expressing her appreciation of them, indicating that parenting exposed her to the costs of living apart from her parents for herself as well as her son.

As discussed in Chapter 5, although her non-migrant mother, Sarah, tends to minimize the difficulties posed by her children's migration, one of the few times she alludes to loss is when speaking about the consequences of living apart from her grandchildren. This suggests that, as with her daughter, it is through experiences and expectations of a relationship with the next generation that she has been faced with aspects of migration she usually tries to underplay.

Although Mary frames family relationships as operating in a domain that is largely unrelated to apartheid, one of the few times she presents family relationships as bound up with apartheid is in discussing the relationship between her mother and

nanny. Another is towards the end of the second interview. When I thought she had said as much as she intended to, I ask how her views have changed since Mandela's "release". Mary responds by repeating the word "release" in portraying this event as a turning point: it created an opportunity to feel differently about being South African. As with several other participants, reflecting on this event seems to trigger thoughts about the possibility of return. However, she says that what would stop her is "um – yeah –um - I don't - I don't know if it's a place I would want to take – a *young – white boy* into". Her hesitancy, emphasis and uncertainty indicate considerable emotion. This suggests that, despite attempting to claim a largely de-racialized identity, her son's position as white and male has confronted her with some of the uncomfortable consequences of the loss of privileged status. Comments like these indicate that, although participants might have attempted to keep the political and personal apart, they are inextricably linked. It suggests therefore that a shift in relation to one aspect of identity (apartheid) can lead to an altered understanding of another (the family).

### **7.1.2 On agency in relation to apartheid**

This section draws on narratives that present encounters with the next generation as inextricably linked with apartheid. It focuses on excerpts from interviews with two migrants, Jack and Rachael, and a non-migrant sibling, Heather.



Jack states that in contexts of migration, children “become very very special” because they are “a token of all sorts of the new life you are making”. Although he expresses this view in discussing his parents’ experience, references to his own children leaving home and working abroad suggest it draws on his experience of being left by his own children too.

As Jack had said little about his children, I introduced them by asking how their understanding of him had been affected by their having a father who had been brought up in a different context. Although I make no reference to any negative associations with South Africa in asking this question, Jack’s response is to say that because they had loving grandparents their associations with South Africa are positive. However, he pauses before introducing a series of narratives that illustrate his daughter Denise’s growing awareness of, and discomfort with, apartheid. This suggests he views her relationship with South Africa as problematic and apartheid as integral to his children’s understandings of his position as a migrant.

Jack: She (*Denise*) always said: ‘how could you allow yourself to live and see this happening?’ And I would say – defensively – Denise- but I couldn’t do a bloody thing about it! She said ‘but surely you’ - and I said ‘well you did things’ and she’d say ‘well - you treated your servants well - and you gave them a Christmas pocket at Christmas’ - but you didn’t really - you didn’t *identify* -

they were not - they were different from you - they were kaffirs.

She said - d-do you really mean - you, how could you stand?' I

said 'well - now you understand why I am happier to be here'.

Jack uses Denise's reported questions to acknowledge what is uncomfortable while portraying himself as open to discussing his past treatment of people racialized as 'others'. Although the derogatory "kaffirs" positions him as willing to acknowledge racialized dis-identification, the vague "you did things" suggests an attempt to exonerate his position.

The agency claims that underpin his daughter's questions and his response to these questions are markedly different: Denise's 'how could you allow yourself' assumes agency, while Jack's extreme case "couldn't do a bloody thing" refutes this view. Positioning himself as powerless in an interview with a white South African suggests an appeal for understanding from someone whom he assumes is in a similar position. This narrative does not refer to his position as a Jew. However, having framed his parents' migration in terms of Jewish histories of anti-Semitism, it hints at the particular powerlessness of someone with family and cultural legacies of exile and oppression.

In presenting encounters with his children as a site in which he was forced to confront with his own position in relation to apartheid, the view Jack presents is situated in terms of one of his children, Denise. This may mean that he finds her

particularly challenging and/or that he has a special investment in his relationship with her.

However, differences in view are unlikely to relate to relational dynamics alone. As evident in Skeggs' (2003) analysis of intergenerational dynamics in contexts of class mobility, they are likely to have been informed by access to different doxa at certain points in their lives too. Jack grew up at the time when racialized asymmetries in power were becoming increasingly associated with what was 'natural', shortly before the South African Nationalist Party came to power. In contrast, Denise's views will have been informed by post-apartheid doxa, and by the discourses that circulate in the country in which she and her father live. Therefore, although leaving might have represented an opportunity to escape a positioning as racially privileged, it exposed Jack to the risk of appearing shameful in the eyes of the "very very special [...] "tokens" of his new life. Migrating also meant that Jack will have been exposed to the ways in which the British press and public currently regard apartheid. Consequently, framing his actions in the past tense suggests that, like his daughter, he now questions what stopped him from engaging more actively with what was "happening".

Rachael offers a more extreme version of the risk of being seen as shameful in the eyes of one's child. As discussed in Chapter 5, she began her first interview by saying she was born Indian but "declared white". She returns repeatedly to contesting her own agency often using gesture to highlight what she says. For

example she bangs on the table while saying that the “wounds” she has been left with are particularly deep because what was “*painful* is what gave me a *life*”. This suggests that what she has to say cannot be articulated in words alone.

Although Rachael positions migration as allowing her to claim a life that is less dominated by apartheid, she frames it as an opportunity to claim greater emotional distance from her mother. However, her son’s longing for more contact with family has forced her to rethink the value she ascribed to living apart from close family. It has also forced her to rethink the importance she attaches to migrant parents sharing their cultural heritage with their children. Whilst this appears to have been possible in relation to her Indian heritage, it seems to have been more problematic in relation to South Africa:

Rachael: He doesn’t *know* all of this – Erin (*her son*) - he’s (*long pause*) but I will - I intend to tell him - he doesn’t know all this detail.

Although Rachael says she intends to tell her son “all this detail”, she has not yet. As he was seven years of age at the time of these interviews, it is possible that she feels he needs to be older before they speak more openly about her past. However, she may also feel that she is not ready for this discussion. Hence, keeping her past from her son may reflect a desire to protect him from aspects of the past that would not only be damaging to him but to his view of her as well.

Nevertheless, the hesitancy and repetition that mark this statement and the emphasis on his not knowing suggest she feels troubled by the delay in sharing this with him.

Rachael continues by saying that racism hasn't "dawned" on Erin. Living in a different socio-political context may well have protected him from the intensity of the racialized challenges she had faced at a similar age. However, as she positioned herself as well aware of racialization when far younger and gives examples of witnessing considerable racism during visits to post-apartheid South Africa with Erin, it is possible he may "know" and have more of an understanding of racialization than Rachael wishes to acknowledge.

As discussed in the previously, one way of preventing interactions with children from being contaminated by the past is through silence. The difficulty is that, as Rachael herself indicates, silence can lead to a rift between parents and their children, creating "generations of children born out of any genealogy" (Apfelbaum, 2001, p170). Moreover, despite attempts at censoring, the unsaid and non-rational tends to break into what is being said in the form of hesitations and nuances of speech. This means that children are presented with two levels of knowing: one based on the reported information and a second on interpretations of the gaps in what is told.

The desire to protect children from the racialized knowing that constitutes white South Africans' experience emerges in Heather's account too. When discussing the impact of migration on the next generation, she mentions the value of her niece and nephew having access to a different education system and a way of life and that her children have benefited from engaging with cousins who live abroad. However, far greater emphasis is placed on difficulties, including the difficulties migration posed for Kate's children, the migrant sibling with whom she appears to be particularly close. For example, she reports Kate's British-born daughter as saying: "every time she (*her mother Kate*) walks as a clan she's instantly happy". Comments like this seem aimed at warranting a decision to provide her children with a different experience: they position her sister's children as burdened by the consequences of their mother's decision to live apart from close family.

However, on being asked about aspects of migration that are particular to South Africa, Heather introduces a more uncomfortable contrast between migrancy and non-migrancy. She indicates that her decision to remain has forced her to continue to engage with significant asymmetries in power and resources, with living in close proximity to "immediate poverty" and "immediate suffering". Rather than positioning herself as powerless in this situation, she indicates that her sensitivity to such asymmetries led to a decision to adopt a career that would allow her to address some of the damaging consequences of apartheid.

However, she continues by returning to the contrast between her own position and that of her migrant sister:

She doesn't have to deal with this anymore - she doesn't have to deal with this complexity - so whatever complexity you're dealing with there - it's OK. It's different - but it's not this un-resolvable kind of complex - difficult thing.

Although the generalizing "you" acknowledges the "complexities" migrants face, the comment that migrants do not have "to deal with this" suggests that she views migration as an easier option. It frames their challenges as less significant than those posed by remaining, positioning her own stance as more heroic than that of migrants. On being asked to say more about the "un-resolvable", she mentions the "uneasy" nature of her position as "white" in Africa. She frames herself as supportive of the dismantling of apartheid but criticizes the current government's policies in relation to HIV/AIDS and the actions of the president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. However, her account also suggests that histories of racialized oppression mean that it is problematic for a white person to disagree with current policies without appearing to be racist.

Less than thirty minutes before the second interview, Heather called to cancel, saying she had little to add, but then agreed to meet. Shortly after starting the interview, she asked about my motivation for undertaking this research. I decided

to stop the tape before sharing some of my own concerns about the impact of migration on my family. I was relatively guarded in what I said and at the time, viewed my response as a way of balancing being respectful of her question with a theoretically-informed commitment to avoid prejudicing the data. However, I now see it as a reflection of personal ambivalence about exposing more troubled aspects of my own experience to another South African, particularly someone who, unlike me, decided to stay.

After a brief discussion, with Heather's permission, I resumed taping. The shift to a more dialogic interchange seemed to allow her to move away from problematizing the position of others to issues she found troubling. Having spoken about the need to protect her children from being "contaminated" by the racist views of one member of her extended family, she alludes to her own history of racialization. She uses the inclusive "we" in saying "how awful what we know is", thus constructing a link between a need to protect her children from her own understanding as well.

Heather deals with this troubled position by returning to the more positive consequences of remaining, such as the opportunity to engage in "healing this country". Continuing with the notion of healing, she speaks about a need to ensure that her children hear a story that has been worked through, a story which she says includes the "shame" and "pain" of apartheid and is "articulated through Mandela's voice - not through a hateful old lady". Once more, her comment



suggests a projection of what is hated and feared, namely racism, onto “a hateful old lady”. However, the earlier reference to the awfulness of her own sense of knowing indicates that she is also unsure whether to trust her own voice in trying to prevent her children’s ideas from being contaminated by the past. To encourage her to continue I say:

JA: Well it’s probably going to take a few generations.

Heather: I mean in our heads - we’re always still measuring things like that. You know either how - how bad the hurt was - or how much the hurt healed or - we’ll still measure things like that - and I think that’s the joy - that my children don’t necessarily have to measure things like that.

My comment reflects a joining strategy researchers commonly adopt to encourage participants to elaborate on issues they regard as significant. However, in this context, it is infused with a personal understanding and desire to make sense of experiences of “measuring things like that”.

Heather responds by using the collective “you” and “we”, positioning her comments as illustrative of the experience of all white South Africans of her generation. She frames remaining as enabling her to experience the “joy” of seeing her children construct lives that are less racialized than her own. However, my own reference to the future and her use of the present tense

suggests that, despite such joys, people who grew up during apartheid will continue to “measure” our lives in terms of our histories of racialization. As Heather does not say what she means by “measuring things like that” and I do not ask her, it is unclear if she is referring to the damaging consequences of apartheid or to assessing individual worth according to racialized categories. However, both possibilities accord with Billig’s (1999) proposal that in the post-apartheid context, white South Africans are not only required to avoid saying what had been acceptable before but to censor their thinking as well.

This interchange positions all white South African parents as needing to be vigilant against expressing taken-for-granted ideas that could prove problematic for their children and place them in a shameful or embarrassing position in the eyes of their children. However, she says later that the need to measure is particularly applicable to those who “stayed”. This suggests that amongst the “unresolvable” issues non-migrant and migrant siblings face in relating to one another is that non-migrants have had to take on a level of responsibility for apartheid that migrants have escaped.

The narratives discussed here reflect considerable overlaps with the positions of migrants. Although some prioritized the personal, and others the political, both sets of participants positioned these encounters as situations in which they felt able, or perhaps forced, to reassess the meanings they had ascribed to earlier behaviours and motives. A number of factors may account for this shift in view.

There tend to be shifts in power and dependency as family members move across the life course in situations in which migration has not taken place (Bornat, Dimmock, Jones and Peace, 2000). However, in contexts of migration, reduced access to other sites of identity and family members seems to increase the importance of taking heed of one's children's views, even where they relate to aspect of experience people have downplayed before. As reflected in Mary's portrayal of her son's longing for what she had dismissed, more contact with her parents, the views parents ascribe to their children may reflect their own longing for a past that never was and/or a future that could not be.

These narratives also highlight the importance of considering what might be particular about positions of migrancy and non-migrancy. Remaining in South Africa appears to have meant that non-migrants have been faced situations in which they and/or others felt an added pressure, or perhaps desire, to redress the consequences of racialized privilege. However, the importance accorded to South Africa in the international press has meant that migrants have been confronted with situations in which their children's views about apartheid and the possibilities of agency are different to their own. The widespread publication of the atrocities of the apartheid regime mean that for both sets of participants, the desire to identify with the next generation seems to be imbued with the desire to dis-identify with aspects of the apartheid that are uncomfortable to consider. In some cases, this shift led to re-owning uncomfortable aspects of self that had

previously been repudiated and projected onto others. However, this was not always the case.

## **7.2 Encounters with death**

In the second part of this chapter, I illustrate how a real or anticipated death, particularly the death of a parent, can lead to reassessing the ways in which migrant and non-migrant kin had viewed migration and the positions that they and their family had adopted in relation to apartheid. I also discuss how death can become a site for reworking the territorialized nature of identities, particularly identifications with the country in which they and their family been accorded a privileged racialized status by a much discredited regime.

I have chosen to focus primarily on the death of a parent because, although several participants mentioned the death of a sibling, an elderly partner or a child, almost every participant referred to the real or anticipated death of a parent. Another reason is that, although most people face the death of a parent in later life far more of the literature is devoted to the impact of parental death on children who are minors (Kubler Ross, 1983; Smith and Pennells, 1995; Stallion and Wass, 1994). This neglect may reflect an assumption that the death of a parent in later life presents less psychological upheaval. However, this notion is disputed by the few academic publications and autobiographical accounts that focus on the death of a parent, as exemplified in the work of Morrison (1993),

Pipher (1999), Stroebe and Stroebe (1987), Umberson (2003) and Walsh and McGoldrick (1991).

In Chapter 4 and the first part of this chapter, I discussed the shift towards increased recognition of relational aspects of the self (Bowlby, 1980; Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target, 2004; Gorrell Barnes, 1989; Minuchin, 1972; Stern, 1985). This relational perspective is exemplified in the idea that the child finds itself in the mind of her/his parents, in the experience of being thought about by a mother and/or father. It suggests that, instead of viewing parents and children as discreet individuals, they need to be viewed in terms of a relational context that has a past and future. This frames parents and children as receptive as well as vulnerable to the influence of one another (De Mol and Buysse, 2008). Butler (2008) draws on this view in proposing that if one's sense of self bound up with others, one of the constant risks of 'sociability' is the threat posed by the potential death or destruction of the other. This echoes suggestions that, to some extent, the death of a parent represents the death of part of one's self. It may also account for why the death of a parent during one's middle years tends to be experienced as an emotional, psychological and social turning point, even though it may be less surprising than deaths that occur when one is a child (Umberson, 2003).

Until recently, little academic attention had been devoted to studying experiences of death in contexts of transnational migration. A notable exception is the clinically-based analysis of Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) which suggests that

memories of a homeland and feelings of being displaced tend to become exacerbated around times of the death of a relative. This notion is reflected in the more recent findings of researchers like Al-Ali (2002), Ben Ezer (2006) and Gardner (2002). With the exception of Gardner, these authors do not confine their analysis to parental death. However, they fit with my own sense that the death of my father represented an arena for our family to affirm a sense of shared kinship as well as acknowledge that we live apart. My experience also echoes Al-Ali's proposal that the events surrounding death can become a context for asserting and contesting identification with the political ideologies of the country in which some family members continue to live and others have chosen to leave.

I address these issues by analyzing excerpts from the accounts of three migrants, Charlie, Steve and Adam. However, I have also chosen to analyze how another migrant, Gillian, reflects on the death of her son in order to consider how death affects territorialized nature of identifications in situations other than parental death. Since particularly little attention has been paid to analyzing the impact of death on non-migrants, this second part of the chapter includes an analysis of an interchange between two non-migrant parents, Ruth and Isaac. It shows how death may be invested with the hope of disentangling identifications with apartheid-based South Africa. Because the research treats Jewish identities as a particular context for interrogating white South African migration, with the

exception of Charlie, the discussion focuses on narratives that emerged in interviews with participants who identified themselves as Jews.

### **7.2.1 Death as exposing changes in experiences of family**

Charlie is married to a South African-born woman, Hillary, and has two children. As discussed in Chapter 5, he migrated to Britain, leaving his parents and sibling, a research participant I name Alex, in South Africa. He begins by framing his decision to migrate as a way of dealing with the “*unbearable*” experience of feeling unable to balance his response to the racism evident in his extended family with the pressure of meeting expectations of how family relationships should be conducted.

As Charlie had previously spoken primarily about apartheid, I asked him to say more about his family:

JA: Thinking about the family that - you have - the two of you have here – how do you think it’s influenced the kind of shape - of your family - with your-yourself and your relationship with your kids and each other?

Charlie: Phew! It - the – ah – it’s well - it’s something I I think about quite a lot - particularly um - particularly at at times of *loss* as well because (*coughs*) both of Hillary’s (*his wife*) parents *died*

within the last few years and - that - that has been a *terrible* experience for all of us - but *particularly* for Hillary - um – and - it's been difficult to understand how powerful it's been for - for my *kids* – um - who - in a sense – er – haven't grown up with their grandparents [...] They *haven't* had grandparents at least close by - and so - ah - you know - if they – if they had *tears* to shed - by and large they were *internal* tears when their grandparents died because - in the way these things happen - Hillary went *back* for the funeral and I *stayed* and looked after the kids and school and all of that so it wasn't - it wasn't one of those – *family* - family things that - um - that you go through together - and you you share the you know the *death* or the the *burial* - you know all that *sadness* type of thing - but it was - it had been - quite a - a difficult thing for - Hillary to - *go away* and go through all of that - there - leave us to go through the sadness and - the companionship and support of friends here. Um - both Antony and Sandy and myself - and then come back three or four weeks later not having experienced any of that love and sort of *gathering together* of the friends as they - as they did.

The question I ask is replete with hesitation and reframes. Since Charlie was the first person I interviewed, it is likely to reflect a particular ambivalence about asking him about an area of experience that I view as highly significant but he did



not mention. However, as he was not unusual in delaying speaking about children until prompted to do so, my hesitation may reflect an insider's ambivalence about confronting how relationships with my own "kids" have been affected by migration.

Charlie positions the events surrounding the death of his parents-in-law as illustrative of the main impact migration has had on their lives: loss. By framing death as illustrative of the losses incurred through migrating, his narrative accords with proposals that the memories associated with home tend to become stronger around times of death (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1984). His hesitation and use of emphasis suggest that reflecting on death and its link with migration places him in a troubled subject position. He mentions his own parents' increased frailty and need for care later in this account. In view of proposals that the death of a parent tends to confront children with their own sense of mortality (Umberson, 2003), these deaths are likely to have confronted him with his parents' mortality, as well as his own.

Although Charlie mentions his wife's loss, greater emphasis is paid to his children's experience of their grandparents' death. He begins by saying that they "haven't grown up" with grandparents, moves to the more emphatic "*haven't* had grandparents" before qualifying this with "at least close by". He uses the absence of any outward expressions of emotion to contest the idea that intermittent face-to-face contact with grandparents might mean that these relationships were not

important to his sons. Suggesting that his children might have had “internal” tears introduces the possibility that they experienced grief but showed this in a different way. The idea that people articulate their feelings in different ways and/or that parents might be unable to read their adolescent children’s feelings is not particular to situations of migration. However, because Charlie mentions this to illustrate the impact of migration on his family, he seems to be suggesting that migration compounds the difficulties parents have in interpreting their adolescent children’s feelings. He seems to be suggesting that it means that his appreciation of the social world and ways of enacting is different to those of his children because they have grown up in different contexts (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991).

Anthropologists have long argued that the rituals associated with death offer a way of marking and coming to terms with the dialectics of change and continuity across the life course (Imber-Black and Roberts, 1992; van Gennep, 1909). Charlie’s narrative frames Hillary’s attendance at her parents’ funerals in South Africa as a chance to come to terms with their deaths, her altered position in the life course and her altered relationship to the two places in which she is emotionally situated.

However, the constraints appear to mean that the events surrounding these deaths highlighted discontinuities in identity and relationships. Because Charlie and their children could not be present, the funeral did not represent “one of those - *family – family things*”, presumably for himself, his wife and children. He

uses a term more usually associated with religious events, “*gathering*”, in suggesting that remaining in Britain meant that the “love and *gathering together* of the friends” were integral to his and his children’s experiences of death. However, despite presenting their experience as a reconstitution of traditional ways of mourning, hesitancies indicate that he remains troubled by the difference between their experience and canonical responses to death.

Charlie’s reference to a supportive network positions him as emotionally located in Britain. However, it frames his positioning within this network as someone who is seen to be symbolically linked with the places and people he had left. There is no indication of how apartheid might have informed “the kind of *shape*” of the family he has constructed in Britain or his positioning within this friendship network. As discussed in Chapter 5, towards the end of his interview he mentions what appears to represent an emerging discourse, greater awareness of his own racism. This suggests that positioning himself as part of a supportive community in Britain reflects a desire to replace the image of himself as racially oppressive with that of himself as someone who is worthy of “the support and *companionship* of friends *here*” and situated in a non-racist ‘*here*’.

### **7.2.2 Death as a site for reworking the link between place and identity**

Imagined associations between places and identities underpin this section of the chapter in which I address how death may be presented as a site for re-working,

or as Fortier (2002) suggests 're-remembering', place-bound identifications. As discussed in Chapter 1, the critique of essentialized notions of identity and culture, and developments in researching and theorizing globalization, have led to increased interest in how relationships with place are made and remade over time. For example, although Said (1990), Appadurai (1990) and Olwig (2002) emphasize somewhat different aspects of the imaginary, their concepts of 'imaginary geographies, deterritorialized 'scapes' and 'cultural sites' suggest that instead of viewing 'home' as a stable and fixed place, home is better understood as a set of practices, memories and rights. They allow for the possibility that the propensity to migrate is balanced by an attachment to, and identification with, particular places like a family home rather than the nation state.

In contexts of migration, family memories are commonly seen the primary grounding for identity constitution (Falicov, 1998; Wang, 2004). However, as evident throughout these data-analytic chapters, for white South African migrants and their close family, memories of family appear to be bound up with re-remembering and re-imagining what it meant to be a family that is located in an apartheid-based South African family. To illustrate this, I focus on excerpts from interviews with three migrants, Gillian, Martin and Steve, and two non-migrant parents, Ruth and Isaac, all of whom identify themselves as Jews. However, I also draw on a quote discussed in the previous section in which Charlie, who is not Jewish, alludes to the link between death and place-based identification.

Much of Gillian's account centres on claims to a deterritorialized sense of identity. She positions a family and cultural history of migration as integral to her experience of family and to what it means to be Jewish. Detailed descriptions of family and friendship networks that span more than one geographic locality seem aimed at refuting the idea that distance restricts the possibility of remaining close to people who live elsewhere.

About halfway through her first interview, Gillian illustrates this by describing how she managed to remain in contact with her British and South African family while working outside of Britain for a brief time. It is at this point that she mentions the unexpected death of her son, Tony. Although she refutes the idea that working abroad might have been a response to his death, its timing suggests a desire for distance from a place that had become associated with death.

However, rather than framing death as the end of a relationship, Gillian positions Tony as a "connector" in life as well as death. This is exemplified in describing her (Gillian's) siblings and their partners' responses to his death. Although her siblings live in South Africa they "all came the next day - they came (*long pause*)". Their ability to be with her at this time positions Gillian's experience of family as multi-sited. However, it frames this unanticipated and tragic life event as enabling them to actualize a pattern of connecting that is usually less accessible following migration.

Gillian also frames Tony's death as altering her position in relation to the society in which she lives. The "wonderful" bereavement letters she received gave Gillian a different understanding of the people she repeatedly describes as "the English". Tony's position as a connector is also evident in descriptions of an event Gillian and her family have initiated to mark his death. Because this event is attended by her family, friends and people Tony knew through school and university, it has become a site for developing and displaying a relational network that is not confined to geographic or national boundaries, and is linked with, but extends beyond, family.

The way in which Gillian positions Tony as having a significant effect on her current experience of self and relationships is reminiscent of how participants like Max, a non-migrant parent, allude to a parallel between retaining the deceased and those who live elsewhere as an ongoing 'psychological presence' (Boss, 1991, 1999) in their lives.

Near the end of the second interview, Gillian was asked whether her views about migration had changed following the dismantling of apartheid.

Gillian: Would we have left? And I think the answer would be no.

There's so much work to be done there - and so many so many outlets for your talents - and people don't have the fear any more of what the government's doing. You know - of course there's this

fundamental - issue about South Africans - and did you get involved in politics - which is what you asked me. No - but when I read Mandela's book I was so ashamed - that there I'd lived through that very period and just buried my head in the sand and not even *tried* [...] I didn't have enough guts to be able to do anything – erm – positive - and I don't think if I'd stayed there I would have done - with my - my mum and my family - but now - when we went back now and I actually went into the townships and I did the tourism – now - I would - if I had to go back there is a lot of work to be done.

Gillian responds to my question by posing and answering another: “would we have left?” Her reply introduces the *uchronic*, an imagining of how life might have been different had she decided to remain in South Africa. She continues by drawing repeatedly on extreme case formulations, “so much [...] so many so many”, in outlining areas in which her input would be appropriate. Reference to work that needs “to be done” seems aimed at replacing a self-image as shameful with that of someone committed to redressing the damage apartheid has caused. Despite this claim, she positions questions about the past as one of the “fundamental” issues she, and presumably any other white migrants, would need to confront in returning to South Africa: “did you get involved in politics?”

Gillian uses the emphatic “No” in acknowledging her lack of engagement in opposing apartheid. She uses a metaphor commonly used to denote an inability or unwillingness to recognize the unpalatable, “buried my head in the sand”, in describing her sense of shame. I would not want to suggest that her altered understanding of what it meant not to have “*tried*” to get involved represents a form of death. However, her comment is reminiscent of proposals that experiences of shame face one with the death of a more preferred sense of self (Kaufman, 1992). In common with several other participants, Gillian relates her sense of shame to the experiences of reading Mandela’s autobiography and visiting the townships. Her reference to Mandela’s *A Long Walk to Freedom* reflects Nuttal’s (1998) proposal that autobiographies like this have played an important role in exposing white South Africans to what they would not, or were reluctant to, see before.

Gillian reworks her positioning as shameful by framing her response as contingent on respect for “my mum and my family”, presenting a commitment to family and her mother in particular as compromising the choice she now sees as preferred. There is no direct reference to the death of her mother. However, contextualizing what she says about her mother with “but now” implies that she is no longer alive. This suggests that the possibility of a different engagement with South Africa is not only a response to the dismantling of apartheid but is bound up the death of a person in whom important aspects of her identification with South Africa were rooted. However, in light of the importance she accords to her



children and grandchildren elsewhere in her account, what holds her back from some form of return are not only “fundamental” questions about apartheid, but reluctance to leave the place that signifies her relationship with her family of procreation including her deceased son.

The idea that memories of a homeland and feelings of being uprooted tend to be exacerbated around times of death seems to underpin discussions about where one’s remains should be placed. Martin’s father was born in Lithuania and migrated to South Africa, but was forced to leave as a result of his high-profile role in anti-apartheid actions. He indicates that when his father left the relationship between father and parents (Martin’s grandparents) was deeply troubled.

Martin relates these difficulties to the particular nature of the dynamics between his father and grandfather as well as to different views about how Jews should have responded to apartheid. His father’s view was that Jews had an added responsibility to oppose the racialized oppression of others while his grandfather felt it was inappropriate for his son (Martin’s father) to take action that might damage their position in a country in which he and his family have been exposed to less anti-Semitism than elsewhere. Nonetheless, Martin’s father’s final wish was for his ashes to be scattered in South Africa, the country that signified the remembered presence of fellow anti-apartheid activists and the people whose rights he had fought for as well as his parents.

Steven's father was born in Germany. He describes his father's migration as a "double trauma", positioning his father as struggling with the legacy of trying to escape from both "father and fatherland" throughout his life. He uses this history to explain his father's claim that his "soul" was in Germany and "heart" in South Africa. Steven returns to this notion of a split and of the embodied nature of identities after saying that his father's experience of racialized victimization in Germany contributed to his decision to adopt an active stance in opposing discrimination in South Africa. It is at this point that he introduces his father's wish to be buried in Germany, the place associated with troubled memories for his father because of his positioning as Jewish as well as his positioning in relation to his father (Steven's grandfather).

Final requests can have great power (Pipher, 1999). Both men present their fathers' anticipation of death as allowing them to reach some form of reconciliation in relation to their own father and a country imbued with problematic associations. Their accounts suggest that, where relationships have been particularly troubled, final requests like these may assist the dying and surviving to achieve some resolution.

However, they can put the survivors in a 'double bind' (Bateson, 1972). Like their fathers, both participants position themselves as troubled by aspects of their relationship with their fathers. Their accounts are also similar in that both men

frame their lives as dominated by dramatic aspects of their fathers' pasts. In drawing attention to this issue, they highlight the unusual nature of their fathers' requests. However, they also suggest a longing for a different sort of reconciliation with their own fathers and/or the country they had left.

Ruth and Isaac's references to death centre on the territorialized nature of identities as well. All three of their children live outside of South Africa. Although they seem eager to speak the first time we meet, the pace of the second interview is more stilted. It begins with Ruth saying that a recent parting from one of her daughters has left her with the "bye bye blues". As discussed in Chapter 6, she and her husband say more about an issue they had only alluded to in the first interview, a desire, or perhaps pressure, to account for their implicit positionings as white privileged and oppressive.

As with all interviews, once I felt the participants had said all they intended to, I asked whether there is anything further they wished to say. Both Ruth and Isaac mention issues they had raised earlier: Ruth to the losses incurred through migration and Isaac to increased rates of crime. Returning to these issues suggests a desire to end interchange by blurring the boundaries between those considered victim and oppressor. It suggests an appeal for recognition of the more private struggles faced by white South Africans who have not only been separated through migration but chosen or felt forced to remain in the country.

It is at this point that Ruth introduces death. The change in pace and the introduction of death in an interview which started with a discussion about separating from her daughter fits with proposals that, when people migrate, subsequent partings can trigger feelings that increase an awareness of death (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1984):

Ruth: Erm - you know there's one aspect - which might be a little bit morbid - but it's a very real er er worry. When you get older - and you're frail - and you're ill and you die – erm - there's a - like a termination from everybody's point of view - then immediately we've gone - the children have absolutely no connection with South Africa any more - and erm it's a - it's a very big worry - if one of us should go - what'll happen to the other [...] – I don't know if Isaac's felt that.

Isaac: Yeah - I think you do. I think that it also comes out in other ways. I think that you feel - that if you die - must you be buried in the normal way - or must you be cremated? This is very - how you feel.

Qualifiers and hesitations position Ruth as torn between the desire to discuss an aspect of migration that is particularly worrying and concern about how it might affect her, her husband and possibly me. She warns us that she intends to raise a “morbid” issue, hesitates after saying “die” and uses the generalizing “you” in

what appears to be an attempt to minimize the implications of bringing death into the interview by distancing it somewhat.

A pre-occupation with one's own death and that of a partner is commonly understood to be an inevitable aspect of growing older (Umberson, 2003). Rather than saying more about whether the surviving partner should stay in South Africa after one of them dies, Ruth turns to discussing how their deaths might affect their children's relationships with South Africa. The non-specific "termination from everybody's point of view" leaves open whether she is referring to the end of her own life, her relationship with Isaac, her children's need to return to see and care for them, or a combination of these possibilities. As the word "termination" is frequently used to denote the abortion of a foetus, or the end of a contract, it alludes to disruptions to the anticipated future as well as the past. Neither participant mentions apartheid. However, because this interchange follows on from discussing their own agency in relation to apartheid, a "termination from everybody's point of view" suggests a hope that death might disentangle their children and grandchildren's memories of her and Isaac from what is seen as shameful.

Isaac responds with a question about where their remains should rest after death. He frames burial as "normal" and contrasts this with cremation, an option that would allow his remains to be spread across the localities in which he is emotionally centred, South Africa and closer to his children. The term "must"

suggests an urgency that may relate to the impending possibility of death. However, because he goes on to introduce orthodox Jewry's injunctions against cremation, the term "must" positions a course that would challenge this religious injunction as forced. As with Ruth, although the emotional intensity of what he says denotes a personal concern, Isaac structures his comments in terms of the generalizing "you" and "one", positioning these dilemmas as shared by others.

It is unclear whether Ruth or Isaac ever raised this dilemma with their daughter Melanie. However, like her parents, she positions her identity as a Jew as integral to her sense of self and her understanding of death. In discussing a visit to the South African cemetery in which her parents-in-law are buried, she describes how she, her husband and children performed some of the traditional Jewish rituals associated with death. This included washing their hands on leaving the cemetery and leaving a stone on the grave. The tradition of washing one's hands following contact with death is not a uniquely Jewish tradition. However, my understanding is that leaving a stone on the grave is: it represents a sign to others that they are not the only ones to visit the grave, a tradition that is likely to have been particularly important in the context of displacement. Consequently, placing a stone on the grave alludes to a sense of belonging that is not only rooted in South Africa but acts as a reminder that her migration is a replication of prior Jewish migrations. This sense of belonging that extends beyond South Africa is also reflected in her ending this description by wondering

whether her children will return to their grandparents' grave without her or her husband.

Although the accounts discussed here illustrate how in contexts of migration, death can become a site for re-remembering and re-imagining the relationship between identity and place, they also indicate that death may be used and referenced in different ways. Charlie and Gillian position death as an opportunity to assert a sense of self that is multiply located, Martin and Adam position their father's burial wishes as an opportunity to assert identification with one place as primary and Ruth and Isaac refer to an issue that also seems to underpin the other portrayals of death: the hope that death may lead to disentangling memories of the deceased from memories that relate to apartheid.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

This chapter cannot answer questions about how different identifications get taken up or refused in situations of migrancy. However, it suggests that the emotional intensity associated with encounters with the next generation and death mean that these encounters have the potential to allow aspects of self and other to be brought together, leading a different understanding of self, family, migration and histories of racialization.

Frosh (2006) proposes that reworking past understandings of self and other requires recognizing that the other is as real and vulnerable as oneself, and being prepared to engage with incapacitating versions of the self, recognizing what Butler (2003) calls the 'precariousness of the other'. However, encountering the past in a way that retains multiple versions, turbulence and fragmentation can be extremely challenging (Hall, 1998). This is likely to be particularly difficult when private constructions of self, family and those deemed Other intersect with public attempts to remember highly oppressive actions (Ndebele, 1999; Nuttal and Coetzee, 1998).

It is widely recognized that all migratory experiences involve some level of spatial and mental fragmentation (Falicov, 1998; Neyzi, 2004). The narratives discussed here suggest that this sense of fragmentation is likely to be heightened at certain points in the life course, such as moments when one is confronted with the impact one's decisions have had on the next generation and when faced with the real or anticipated death of a parent. They indicate that rather, than fragmentation leading to disintegration, the emotional investment in intergenerational relationships may mean that these encounters trigger a process of reassessment that allows for greater levels of inclusion than exclusion. As such, these encounters have the potential to enable migrants to re-own aspects of identity that have been projected onto others and to develop a different understanding of connections between migration, family and identifications with South Africa's apartheid past. In some cases, shifts in understanding that relate



to the family seemed to have led to and/or be accompanied by a parallel shift in relation to apartheid-based claims. However, this was not always the case.

The idea that encounters with the next generation may confront parents with aspects of self and the past that could not be considered is not particular to situations of migrancy. Clinical work suggests that parents who find it difficult to acknowledge the impact of a life-limiting condition on their own sense of self are often more able to recognize this when faced with its impact on their children (Altschuler and Dale, 1999; Weingarten, 1994). This research suggests similarly that migrant parents who downplay the problematic nature of distance from close family may be forced to reassess this view when faced with their children's longing for greater contact with grandparents and other non-migrant kin. It also suggests that the absence of other highly significant family members increases the emotional investment migrants and their non-migrant family have in relationships and identifications with the next generation. This may be why real and imagined questions of their children have the potential to become sites in which many, but not all, are forced to reflect on the positions they had and were adopting in relation to apartheid.

Real and imagined encounters with death are widely seen as sites in which the dying and close relatives find themselves re-remembering and re-imagining the past, leading to an altered understanding of self and other (Kubler Ross, 1997; Umberson and Chen, 1994; Umberson, 2003). In this context, Charlie's

description of the events surrounding the death of his parents-in-law showed how death may become a site for asserting and contesting a sense of family that is located in more than one place and more than one nationality. It also illustrated another theme underpinning many portrayals of death. References to apartheid elsewhere in his account suggest that death holds the possibility of disentangling memories of the deceased as well as oneself from histories of racialized privilege and oppression.

Jewish identity claims were used as a particular site for considering the ways in which encounters with death were used and referenced. Some of the issues raised by the Jewish participants were not particular to those who identified themselves as Jewish. For example, in common with the Jewish participants, Charlie (who is not Jewish) presented migration as disrupting the traditional practices he associated with marking a death. Consequently, a death in the family became a site in which he was forced to recognize the extent to which his children's and his own sense of family had been affected by migrancy: disruptions meant that the funeral did not represent "one of those *family – family things*".

Some issues seemed more particular to Jewish identity positions. Isaac and his daughter's references to Jewish laws and rituals associated with burial draw attention to issues that are particular to Jews and allude to Jewish diasporic histories. However, in common with others, their accounts of death were bound

up apartheid and shifted depending on the situation under discussion. Isaac's discussions about his parents' death seem aimed at supporting claims to an identity that extends beyond apartheid-based South Africa. However, questions about where he and his wife should be buried indicate that, despite this history, his view of himself is bound up with a history of racialized privilege. These differences show how, although particular histories of exile, displacement, oppression and powerlessness need to be taken into account in making sense of encounters with the next generation and death, they do not mean that all South African Jews adopt a similar position in relation to these histories.

In some cases, these encounters led to renegotiating understandings of the past well before these interviews took place. For others, the interviews seemed to have become a site in which participants felt able or perhaps forced, to reflect on the past in a different way. Therefore, it is perhaps no coincidence that encounters with the next generation and death tended to be introduced towards the end of the first interview or during the second. It is also possible that my position as a white South African migrant increased the likelihood of these issues being considered so that some of what was said might have represented an appeal for understanding from someone whom these participants imagined has an insider's experience of the struggles white families have faced. However, this process may also relate to the establishment of a greater sense of trust as the interviews proceeded.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion: Migration and the family - resiting identities across geographic space, political change and the life course**

This thesis aimed to address three questions:

- 1) How have migrations from apartheid-based South Africa informed migrant and non-migrant kin's constructions of self and family?
- 2) How has the official dismantling of apartheid affected the ways in which migrants and their non-migrant kin make sense of the challenges migration posed to experiences of self and family?
- 3) How are experiences of migration informed by racialized relationships within the home, by the triadic relationship between white mother, black nanny and white child?

The answers to these questions are inextricably linked. The belongings of white South African migrants and their non-migrant kin appear to revolve around remembering, forgetting and imagining movements that span geographic space, changes in the life course and political change. Because the migrations under discussion took place when these participants were much younger, changes in the life course are likely to have introduced different discourses through which subjectivities could be imagined.

The research indicates that even where experiences of family are presented as operating outside of the racism that dominated South Africa, migrants and their non-migrant kin tend to take account of apartheid in warranting their presentations of self and family. It also indicates that the wide spread practice of cross-racialized child care means that constructions of migration have been informed by conscious and unconscious memories of relationships with a highly-significant carer who came to be seen as a racialized Other.

The thesis has been concerned with the intersection of biography and history, individual and collective memory, autobiographical and collective identity and narratives of self and family. Because South Africa was and remains highly racialized, particular attention was paid to exploring how identities were informed by political and classificatory systems that operate outside, prior to, and independent of, particular persons. This required examining how the internal and external worlds of white South Africans have been shaped and structured through racialized interactions. Consequently, the thesis is not able to provide 'historical truths' about South African migrations. Instead, it provides insight into how particular individuals deal with competing 'narrative truths' (Spence, 1982) that are rooted in a specific interactional process, biographical moment and place. They are rooted in the ways in which these individuals negotiated their experience of being interviewed by a particular researcher, a Jewish white South

African migrant who has worked for many years as a family psychotherapist and clinical psychologist in Britain.

The thesis involved analyzing interviews with white people whose transnational links have resulted from at least one family member moving away from apartheid-based South Africa. This necessitated an exploration of the intersections between the views of family members who left and those who stayed. Although it set out to make sense of migrations from South Africa, the frequency with which family and cultural histories of migration were mentioned meant that it also required an analysis of how earlier histories were imagined, acted upon and transmitted across generations.

Because I was particularly interested in extending understandings of migrations that relate to other highly politicized contexts, the analysis prioritized the intersection between political aspects of identity and aspects that are deemed to be more personal. My interest in highly politicized contexts led to a focus on relations with South Africa rather than the country of settlement, Britain. However, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, transnational migrants have the power to disrupt singular narratives of the national state. The interviews took place at time when questions about immigration were becoming increasingly central to political and media debates about nationality, citizenship and multiculturalism, and when the presence of ethnic minorities were becoming solidified and enshrined within the nation state (Cohen, 1994; Gilroy, 1987; Raj, 2003). The interviews also took

place at a time when South Africa was grappling with questions of human rights in the context of immigration and xenophobia, about ten years after the dismantling of apartheid (Crush, 2000). Despite expressions of concerns about the influx of migrants from less politically stable countries in Africa, increased efforts were and continue to be made to encourage the 'return' of South African migrants, be this through moving back, or providing financial and/or technical skills to local projects (Fisher, 2007; Tyler, 2007).

However, Britain's colonial role in South Africa and elsewhere means that the thesis raised issues that are likely to be applicable to understanding how racialized identities are imagined, remembered and articulated in the country in which my children and I live, Britain. What is different is that in South Africa debates about the nation state revolve around attempts to create a 'we' from what were previously 'them' and 'us'. They relate to a context in which the conflicts of the past are not experienced as communal, a context in which there is considerable tension between the desire for remembrance and reconciliation (Nuttal and Coetzee, 1998; Norval, 1999; Schaap, 1998; Stanley, 2006).

This concluding chapter is divided into three sections. The first focuses on findings that reflect the ways in which migration constructs, and is constructed, through experiences of family. The second places particular emphasis on how apartheid-based positions inform experiences of migration and the family and the third considers implications for future research.

## **8.1 Migration and the family**

One of the key findings of this thesis is that experiences of migration construct, and are constructed, through experiences of the family. Rather than focusing on globalized notions of the family, it indicates that researchers need to take account of multiple and potentially contested ways in which family positions and experiences are used and referenced, both consciously and/or unconsciously.

By analyzing the accounts of migrants and non-migrants separately, the thesis has been able to explore some of the differences and overlaps that between these two positions of migrancy. It was also able to illustrate how studying one position of migrancy may reveal aspects of experience that are relevant to another but are expressed in more coded ways.

There were many similarities in the accounts of these two sets of participants. For example, both sets drew on a combination of the same three strategies in presenting their accounts. Migration was presented as damaging to self and/or other family members, as a much needed opportunity to construct a different position in relation to family and/or apartheid and as having introduced relatively little disruption to anticipated experiences. These similarities suggest that when an adult child or sibling migrates, it is not only migrants but their non-migrant kin



who have to make sense of living in a markedly different 'imaginary geography' (Said, 1990).

A similar range of factors appear to account for diversities in response. They include prior family dynamics, the nature of the family positions under discussion, gender, access to alternative sites of cultural or ethnic identities and my own engagement with the issues that were raised. By drawing attention to these factors I wish to indicate that, although the conditions of migrancy might expose individuals to particular discourses, they do not determine the positions individuals adopt in relation to these discourses. What seems to be more important is how these positions intersect with other aspects of identity and how they are used and referenced.

However, important differences emerged as well. Although the development of transnational studies has resulted in increased interest in non-migrants, with notable exceptions, relatively little attention has been paid to the differences between these positions. However, it has been suggested that migrants and non-migrants are differently positioned in relation to transnational moralities and do not enjoy equal access to information and resources in the transnational field (Carling, 2005). Falicov (1998) privileges questions of agency in arguing that even where migration is coerced, a challenge that is particular to migrants is that disruptions to anticipated lives have resulted from their own decisions to leave. In contrast, non-migrants are faced with adjusting to disruptions that were

introduced by someone else's decisions rather than their own. This difference may account for why the non-migrant participants rarely presented migration as allowed them to claim a different position in relation to their family than the migrants and where they did, these changes seemed to be too fragile to survive times of face-to-face contact.

Nonetheless, a question seemed to underpin the accounts of both sets of participants was how much to hold on to or let go of the past. Holding on to what Portelli (1990, 2002) calls 'uchronic imaginings', to how life might have been different had history taken a different course, can be enormously sustaining in situations of flux. It can allow those who live elsewhere to remain an ongoing 'emotional presence' in the lives of other family members and enable past values to be constructed as enduring despite events that contradict that claim (Alvarez, 1999; Boss, 1991, 1999). The tendency to prioritize the uchronic may be part of the reason many migrants framed the political climate as forcing them to leave South Africa: it positions consequences such as restrictions to anticipated ways of caring for elderly parents as an exception, rather than as indicative of a substantial change in family values.

However, the research also showed how prioritizing uchronic imaginings can become problematic because they allow the disjunction between anticipated and lived experience to remain at the forefront of people's experiences. Viewing those who are physically absent as present has the potential to 'freeze'

understandings of self as they were in the past, restricting engagement with new ideas, relational networks and different aspects of self. However, censoring the past can create difficulties too: it increases its power by limiting opportunities to rework the past in the context of the present.

Rather than adopting one of these strategies throughout their account, most participants moved between them in the course of narrating. For example, when reflecting on her position as the child of migrant parents, Rachael (a migrant) emphasized the need to hold on to the past. She talked of how parents' willingness to share their past is essential to helping them and their children make sense of the context in which they live. However, when discussing what she might tell her son about her position as a white South African, she seemed less certain about the value this might have for him and their relationship.

Rachael's attempts to censor may be aimed at protecting, particularly as the past is associated with aspects of self and events that are uncomfortable or events that had been experienced as destructive. However, the accounts of several other participants attest to how rather than protecting children, censoring can increase the power of the past and the likelihood of issues that are not resolved by one generation having an effect on relationships with the next (Alvarez, 1999; Holmes, 1999; Hirsch, 1999).

As discussed earlier, portrayals of migration varied between prioritizing and downplaying loss. The loss that dominates many of these accounts accords with proposals that, even where migrations are coerced, they involve some level of loss and disarray (Falicov, 1998; Alvarez, 1999). Whilst this might reflect material factors in the external world, it also seems to have been informed by the need to negotiate the troubled subject positions posed by migration (Wetherell, 1998).

Aktar's (1995) proposal that childhood loss can affect subsequent responses to loss offers a way of theorizing the prevalence with which participants framed their experiences in terms of loss. It offers a way of understanding how adult experiences of loss, such as increased distance from the next generation and retirement, may trigger or amplify an awareness of the losses migration presented. This idea may account for the frequency with which migrants expressed a growing desire to re-establish greater links with the people and/or places with which they had been more connected in the past, with some raising the possibility of retiring to South Africa. It also seems applicable to theorizing the links between responses to South African migrations and prior encounters of migration. For example, participants whose parents had migrated under difficult circumstances tended to prioritize loss and a lack of agency in reflecting on both forms of migration. Aktar's work suggests that responses to migrations from South Africa were informed by childhood struggles to make sense of what Hirsch (1999) calls 'postmemories', aspects of their parents' pasts that they could not understand. In contrast, participants (two non-migrant parents) who had

themselves migrated under problematic circumstances emphasized personal agency and underplayed loss in discussing their own migration as well as that of their children.

One of the difficulties of Aktar's model is that it fails to take account of the ways in which internalized experiences and memories are informed by the discourses that dominate the contexts in which individuals live. In addition, it does not consider the embodied nature of gendered and racialized identifications. These omissions are particularly problematic for researching migrations from South Africa. The widespread practice of employing black women to care for white children meant that for white South Africans, early experiences of separation occurred at the intersection between 'race', social class and gender (Cock, 1989; Pollock, 1994). Because women tend to play a more significant role in early childcare, early experiences of separation will be different for boys and girls (Benjamin, 1990, 1998; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). This means that the experiences of migration, and reflecting on the memories of migration, are likely to face white South African men with conscious and unconscious memories of coming to see a highly significant carer as a gendered as well as racialized other. It also means that women are likely to be faced with different memories, including memories of what needed to be given up in order to become white and identify themselves with a gendered position that signified racialized exclusion.

Aktar (1995) proposed that the cultural changes and losses incurred through migration can also lead to the development of a different understanding of self and other, what he calls a third individuation. Although he does not mention Bhabha's (1994) 'third space' or Brah's (1996) 'diasporic space', his concept of a third individuation accords with their proposals that situations of uncertainty can allow aspects of identity to be brought together in a different way. The idea that migration might represent an opportunity to construct a different sense of self emerged more frequently in the accounts of migrants. Where this view was expressed by non-migrants, it tended to be used to problematize the need to migrate in order to individuate. There were some exceptions. For example, Alex's account indicates that his brother's migration allowed him to assume a different position in relation to their mother and father. However, his account suggests that this change was too fragile to survive times of face-to-face contact when he found himself assuming the position of the "whingeing" boy he thought he had escaped.

A third strategy involved downplaying the ways in which migration altered anticipated relationships and identities. It positioned migration as leading to levels of disruption that have been relatively easy to transcend. In some situations, this took the form of minimizing the discrepancies between the positions of migrants and non-migrants, as reflected in Gillian's description of relationships with her non-migrant siblings. However, the accounts of Heather and Alex (both non-migrants) illustrate the opposite: continuities in identity were

constructed by framing the differences between themselves and their migrant siblings as indicative of positions that pre-dated the decision to migrate.

I would not want to refute the notion that experiences of migration have been dominated by one aspect of the loss-gain continuum. However, portrayals of losses and gains appear to be bound up with other identity claims, with attempts to affirm, contest and rework troubled family positions that pre-date decisions to migrate and/or emphasizing or obfuscating the political and even moral meanings ascribed to a particular migratory choice.

In Chapter 4, I proposed that Benjamin's analysis of the gendering of identities could be used to account for white South African children's responses to "the loss and uncontrollability" (Benjamin, 1998, p79) involved in coming to see a highly significant carer as a racialized other. There are considerable differences between the development of gendered and racialized identities in early childhood and adult negotiations of difference. However, her work offers a useful frame for theorizing responses to the consequences of reaching similar or different migratory decisions. The tendency to emphasize the differences between migrants and non-migrants seems to reflect her concept of repudiation, a process of projecting what is uncomfortable on to another. In contrast, renunciation, holding on to what is good and bad parts of the self and other, allows for a more enduring identification with someone regardless of difference. Where earlier dynamics were presented as relatively unproblematic, constructions of migration

tended to involve attempts to downplay or repair for any differences migration might have posed. However, where earlier dynamics were presented as problematic, the consequences of migration were emphasized and portrayed as indicative of earlier differences in attitude and behaviour.

The latter was evident in Jeannette's (a migrant) description of her relationship with her non-migrant brother, Michael. She presented migration as an opportunity to escape her position in relation to apartheid as well as him. She described Michael as someone who humiliated her as a child and retains the power to do so as an adult. Distance from him was framed as allowing her to construct a more positive view of herself. Whilst this might be the case, holding on to this view of him seems to represent a defence against the losses incurred through living apart and envy about how remaining allowed him to retain his position as their mother's favourite child. She also alludes to a link between his position as the agent of her humiliation and the racialized humiliation of black South Africans, illustrating how the family, or particular family relationships, could be used metonymically to represent apartheid.

Another similarity is that both sets of participants varied what they said depending on positions in the life course and whether they were referring to the relationship with a parent, child or sibling. One reason positions in the life course were particularly significant relates to the nature of the sample I selected. Restricting participants to people from families where migrants and their non-



migrant siblings had grown up during apartheid and migrants had left in their early-twenties meant that, at the time of the interviews, the non-migrant parents were all in their 70s and 80s and, with one exception, the rest of the sample were in their 40s and 50s. Consequently, the view of the migrants and non-migrant siblings represented the views of 'pivot generations' (Mooney and Statham, 2002), of people who tend to be engaged in caring for elderly parents at the same time as retaining some level of care for their own children. It also meant that changes in the life course had opened up the possibility of different positions from which to understand their lives.

More frequently, discussions about the position of elderly non-migrant parents focused on disruptions to anticipated care, an issue that dominates much of the current literature devoted to elderly non-migrant parents (Coles, 2001; Militiades, 2002). However, this was not always the case. For example, some placed greater emphasis on how they had been able to support one another at times of illness or on histories of prior migrations in framing experiences of family life as relatively unaffected by migration from South Africa. In the case of migrants, this view may have been aimed at minimizing the problematic consequences of their decision to leave. Where this view was expressed by non-migrant parents, it may also have been aimed at avoiding appearing to be needy.

In suggesting these interpretations, I am not disputing the validity of what was said but drawing attention to the consequences of such claims. Both sets of

participants presented migration as interfering with the ways in which family dynamics could have been resolved as family members moved across the life course. Although difficulties in resolving family dynamics are not peculiar to situations of migrancy, where migration has taken place it is possible to attribute the impasse to migration. Here too there were exceptions: awareness of the limited time they had together seems to have allowed some family members to address issues that might otherwise have remained unresolved.

Disruptions to anticipated care tended to arise more frequently in discussions about intergenerational relationships and difficulties in reconciling past differences in discussing sibling relationships. However, because these issues were mentioned in relation to both forms of relationship, this finding echoes an issue I have raised throughout this research. Although certain aspects of family are likely to present particular challenges and opportunities, on its own, any one aspect of identity cannot account for responses to migration.

Nonetheless, several challenges seem to be particular to intergenerational and sibling relationships. Migrants and non-migrant siblings rarely introduced relationships with their children spontaneously. However, once prompted to do so, their accounts suggest that migration tends to increase the emotional investment migrants place in their children.

For example, Jack described the next generation as “tokens” of the migrant’s new life. This increased emotional investment may explain why encounters with children seemed to allow some, but not all, participants to engage with aspects of migration they seemed unable or unwilling to consider before, including aspects of identities that relate to the family as well as to apartheid.

In contrast, Mary (a migrant) framed distance from close family as integral to establishing a preferred sense of self. However, her son’s longing for greater contact with his grandparents and other non-migrant family members forced her to rethink the value she had previously accorded to living apart. She also mentioned that the freeing of Mandela and dismantling of apartheid “released” her from her past relationship with South Africa. Such shifts may account for why several migrants expressed a growing desire to spend more time in South Africa after retiring. It may also be the reason for the recent proliferation of shops in Britain selling goods presented as ‘typically’ South African. However, although Mary does not link these experiences, it is possible her altered understanding of apartheid allowed her to reassess her position in relation to her parents, the people who at some level, represented her relationship with South Africa.

Other issues seemed to be relevant to intergenerational as well as sibling relationships. For example, in discussing how they have dealt with the challenges presented by their decisions to leave or remain in South Africa, many participants focused on reunions and the exchange of telephone calls, emails and gifts.

Reunions are commonly seen as providing a context for dealing with the dialectics of change and continuity. In contexts of migration family reunions seem to create an opportunity to operationalize a concept of family that is more usually unattainable in situations of migration (Gardner and Grillo, 2002; Olwig, 2002). However, they also represent a locus through which the interpersonal and intrapsychic conflicts arising from migrations can be expressed and negotiated. Where migration was presented as introducing levels of disruption that have been relatively easy to transcend, reunions tended to be framed as opportunities to confirm continuities in identity and relationships and validate a sense of family that spans more than one geographic locality and nationality. This view was expressed in relation to other forms of contact. For example, Max (a non-migrant parent) framed the exchange of photographs as enabling him and his migrant family to manage the distance between their personal experience and the canons of what it means to be a family: photographs have “made sure that they (*his grandchildren*) knew of us and so on – and – so.” Where disruptions were emphasized, these same factors were used to highlight the differences between lived and anticipated experience: Ruth portrayed reunions and events like performing a traditional ritual she knows her children follow as highlighting her awareness of the differences between lived and largely imaginary or virtual encounters so that each meeting with her grandchildren feels like a “beginning”.

Participants rarely alluded to apartheid-based claims when describing family reunions. However, as discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter, gaps in narrating and references to apartheid elsewhere in their accounts indicate that apartheid has had a significant impact on how relationships with parents, children and/or siblings are imagined and acted upon, even if it does not always dominate constructions of reunions and other family encounters. Consequently, the research supports Al-Ali's (2002) proposal that where migration relates to a highly politicized context, they offer migrants and non-migrants a forum for bridging or affirming the gaps arising from a migratory choice that is associated with a particular political stance.

## **8.2 Migration and legacies of apartheid**

This section focuses more particularly on how constructions of migration have been informed by memories and imaginings of 'race' and by the intersections between racialized and gendered identities. Anderson (1990) argues that the collapse of a belief system does more than bring down systems of social roles and the identities that go with them. It creates a sense of dispossession, a sense of not knowing who one is within the new system. Billig echoes this idea in proposing that:

With the collapse of apartheid, those old ways of talking have become unacceptable. White speakers cannot be seen to be

racist [...]. Internal controls have to be set in place, so that the thought, as much as the outward spoken act, becomes shameful. The task for white South Africans is not merely to keep their mouths shut, but to ensure that they and their children do not think the previously utterable (Billig, 1999, p260).

The dismantling of apartheid does not mean that white South Africans are no longer able to draw on racist categories in constructing understandings of self and other. However, it introduced a new set of discourses through which subjectivities could be formed. It brought into increased visibility the notion that racist frameworks are culturally relative constructs rather than absolutes, disrupting doxic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999) constructions of family, agency, sense of relevance and moralities.

The sense of not knowing who one is within a different system, what I have been describing as a troubled subject position, was apparent in interviews with all the participants. It was evident in the hesitancy that marked much of what was said about apartheid and nannies; in the use of euphemisms, such as “the underprivileged”, and geo-political entities, such as “Indian”, as coded ways of denoting blackness; in discussing the meanings ascribed to certain words and the need to avoid words that had previously been seen as acceptable. However, it was also evident in my style of speaking, in my own hesitancy when using

black, white and other words that had served as a code for inferiorized racial status.

This sense of uncertainty is indicative of how for white South Africans, the personal and political are inextricably linked, regardless of whether we try to keep them separate. Apartheid and its dismantling has meant that our views have not only been inscribed in and through relationships with parents, children and siblings, but through social and ideological struggles in the wider social context. Consequently, responses to movements across geographical space do not only intersect with changes in the life course but with attempts to make sense of experiences of self and other in the context of political change. It is therefore possible for migrants and our non-migrant kin to draw on any one of these domains, migration, life course and apartheid, in constructing claims that relate to another.

As when reflecting on the consequences of migration for families, participants varied the extent to which they presented family relationships as bound up with apartheid depending on the time frame and relationship under discussion. For example, several positioned their mothers as racist when describing their interactions with black nannies and as un-racialized when speaking about their mothers outside the home. Others framed their own behaviour as non-racist when comparing themselves with certain or all white South Africans but acknowledged their own racialized positions in reflecting on encounters with the

next generation. Some narratives of family were clearly structured in terms of racialized discourses. Elsewhere racialization could only be discerned from fragments that were momentarily and informally elucidated, such as gaps in narrating, changes in pitch or volume and heteroglossic language (Bakhtin, 1981).

Three main patterns were identified. They involved positioning one's own family as un-racialized but other white South Africans as racist, positioning one or several family members as racist but ascribing non-racist or less racist views to oneself, and acknowledging personal thoughts and actions of racism.

One of consequences of positioning the family as operating outside of apartheid is that it allows identifications with parents and/or siblings to remain uncontaminated by racist discourses. This pattern was reflected in narratives in which participants like Adam (a migrant) indicated that within the home, their mothers were able to minimize the damage caused by the racisms that dominated the wider society. Amongst the consequences of the second strategy, positioning others as racist and claiming a personally less racialized identity, is that it offers a way of validating the identity claims associated with either leaving or remaining in South Africa. In some cases, this may have been intentional, as in Steven's (a migrant) mocking portrayal of his non-migrant aunt's taken-for-granted racism. Elsewhere, it was only discernable through changes in pitch,



tone or speed, suggesting a greater ambivalence about framing another family member as racist or less consciousness of the fact that this is what they are doing.

One of the similarities between these two strategies is that they involve projecting what is hated or feared, in this case racism, onto another. The desire to obscure racialized guilt may account for one of the ways in which participants drew on Jewish and other diasporic legacies. Prioritizing these legacies seemed to present an opportunity to frame identities in terms that lay beyond South Africa, thus marginalizing their positions in relation to the context in which they had been accorded a racially privileged status.

A third strategy involved framing all white South Africans as beneficiaries of apartheid and holding implicitly racist positions. This process accords with what Benjamin (1990, 1998) calls renunciation. Renunciation involves holding on to aspects of what is good and problematic about the self and those deemed to be other, thus enabling an enduring identification with the other. Some participants seem to have come to this understanding as a result of experiences that took place during apartheid. For example, Sandra (a non-migrant) presented her sister's decision to marry a man classified as a non-white under apartheid as confronting her with the strength of her own racism. Others like Ruth (a non-migrant), related their altered understanding to exposure to aspects of apartheid that previously had been censored, through books, films and the dissemination of the findings of the TRC.

The research also indicates that real and imagined encounters with the next generation and death can serve as situations that enable migrants and their non-migrant kin to consider aspects of self and other they were unable, or unwilling, to consider before. For example, Jack (a migrant) presented the questions raised by his British-born daughter as forcing, or perhaps allowing, him to reassess his views about his own agency in maintaining or opposing apartheid. The accounts of others like Gillian, Ruth and Isaac indicate that being faced with one's own sense of mortality can lead migrants and non-migrants to reassess their views about the extent to which experiences of self and family were bound up with apartheid, and/or to affirming and contesting the territorialized nature of identities. Although the racialized positions the participants claimed may reflect attitudes and actions in the 'real' world, they also appear to have been bound up with other identity claims, with relational dynamics that were unrelated to migration and attempts to warrant the decision to migrate or stay in South Africa.

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the research offered insights into another area that has received relatively little academic attention, the differences between the positions of migrants and non-migrants. The work that has been published suggests that to make sense of their difference one needs to consider questions of agency, morality and resources (Carling, 2005; Falicov, 1998). These differences are particularly pertinent to understanding South African migrations. Although decisions to leave or remain offered access to a different

range of cultural and material resources, they were also associated with politicized, racialized and even moral meanings (Israel, 1999). Nonetheless, no one view was particular to these two positions of migrancy. Decisions to leave were presented as indicative of opposition to apartheid by some and indicative of political apathy by others. Similarly, remaining was presented a form of apathy or complicity with apartheid by some and as a more responsible and anti-apartheid political stance than leaving by others.

As I have written elsewhere, racialized discourses tended to be less prominent in describing intergenerational relationships than relationships between siblings (Altschuler, 2008). Instead, discussions about intergenerational relationships included some recognition that the discourses to which non-migrant parents and their children had been exposed were different. This does not mean that racialized discourses were never a feature of intergenerational narratives but that, as reflected in references to nannies, they were more usually expressed through the gaps and silences in narrating.

A number of factors may account for this trend. Because migrants and their non-migrant siblings were mostly over the age of 50, many of their parents were ill or had died. As a result, these participants might have been more pre-occupied with the intergenerational shifts in power and dependency that tend to occur at such times and real or anticipated death. However, it is also possible that this omission reflects a greater need to protect intergenerational relationships from racialized

intrusions and an indication of the extent to which understandings of self are bound up with identifications with parents.

Two other factors are also important. Apartheid was not the only discourse circulating in the society in which siblings had grown up but its prominence meant that it would have been particularly significant to warranting identity claims. Although membership of a particular age cohort does not determine the significance associated with certain discourses or responses to particular events, the “social and cultural context in which relationships are conducted provide particular discourses and subject positions through which practices and meanings are constructed” (Edwards, Hadfield, Lucey and Mauthner, 2006, p122). Current theorizing suggests that siblings negotiations of similarities and differences as adults tend to be informed by childhood experiences of relating to someone with whom one is at some level very similar but “stands in one’s place” (Mitchell, 2003, p10). Consequently, where a siblings’ decision is regarded as highly significant, the meanings associated with reaching a different decision may be imbued with feelings that pertain to far earlier negotiations of similarity and difference.

This is exemplified in the ways in which Greg (a non-migrant) and Gillian (a migrant) present the identity consequences of reaching a different decision to some or all of their siblings. Greg emphasizes the differences between himself and his migrant siblings. He claims a “radical” anti-apartheid stance for himself

and portrays his siblings' actions as a reflection of political apathy and a response to feeling uncomfortable in the society to which they moved. In contrast, Gillian underplays difference in what appears to be an attempt to protect relationships with her non-migrant siblings from being associated with a different stance in relation to apartheid. In both cases, the desire to emphasize or underplay difference seems to be informed by the ways in which migration and apartheid were viewed in the societies in which they live. However, stories about family interactions that took place well before migration suggest that these claims were also bound up with childhood negotiations of similarity and difference.

In discussing relationships with the next generation, the accounts of most migrants and non-migrants suggested a desire to avoid relationships with the next generation being contaminated by apartheid. Although migrants like Steven linked their decisions to a desire to raise their children in a society that was less racialized than those he had known when he was growing up, non-migrants drew on this same desire in warranting their decision to remain.

Moreover, both sets of participants alluded to the complicated nature of achieving this wish. For example, the account of another migrant, Jack, suggests that, although he was pleased that migrating meant that his children's doxic understanding of 'race' and apartheid was different to his own, it increased the possibility of being seen as shameful in his children's eyes. Heather's account reflects a similar theme: in describing how remaining in post-apartheid South

Africa has meant having to be alert to the possibility that her children's views might be influenced by her own racist thoughts and those of members of her extended family. These examples illustrate how apartheid continues to inform real and imagined encounters between white South Africans and their children, despite parents' desires to ensure that their children's lives are less racialized than their own.

The research also demonstrated that access to other cultural and ethnic identities could be used in constructing responses to apartheid. For example, it showed how Jewish histories of exile and oppression could be used to claim a marginal position in relation to the rest of white South African society; to legitimate decisions to leave; to claim a heightened sensitivity to the oppression of others; and/or to frame the positions as Jewish and white South African as interchangeable. As reflected in the small but growing literature devoted to this area of study, although histories of diasporic dispossession need to be considered when trying to make sense of Jewish positions in relation to apartheid, they cannot account for the multiple positions Jews assumed, and continue to assume, in relation to apartheid (Shain and Mendelsohn 2000, 2008; Shimoni, 2003; Suttner, 1997; Tatz, Arnold and Heller, 2007).

In discussing his own positions as Jewish and white South African, Robins (1998) highlights the need to adopt an intersectional approach in theorizing Jewish and white South African identities. He draws attention to the parallel

between the embodied ways in which appearance was used to inferiorize black South Africans and how the Jewish body was photographed and categorized to support Nazi theories of Aryan supremacy. He argues that these parallels meant that he was only able to engage with Jewishness, the Holocaust and his grandparents' death in a concentration camp after apartheid ended. His work attests to the importance of recognizing particular experiences of family: it was only then that he could engage with the legacies of Jewish oppression and make sense of some of the silences surrounding his relationship with his father.

The research indicates that gender contributed to the racialization of white identities and constructions of migration in at least two ways. Analysis of the ways in which participants presented the relationships between a white mother, black nanny and white child under apartheid indicted that, as Cock (1989) suggests, these relationships occurred at the intersection between 'race', gender and class. Although men and women referred to their father's response to apartheid when discussing events outside the home, they all indicated that it was through a relationship with mothers and nannies that they came to know what it meant to 'be' white. This meant that racialization intersected with the gendering of identities. For white boys, psychological development involved coming to terms with limits to gendered as well as racialized identities. In contrast, for white girls, it involved the coming to terms with what had to be given up in order to identify with someone who did not only symbolize femininity and whiteness but came to be seen as a racialized excluder. However, because these interactions

took place at a time when thoughts and feelings could not be expressed in words, memories of these racialized and gendered interactions are likely to have remained embodied and lie beyond consciousness (Pollock, 1994).

The compulsory conscription of white men contributed to the development of gendered racialized positions too. In discussing the conflict in Northern Ireland, Dowler (1997) proposed that military conscription constructs gender roles in oppositional terms: it positions men as action oriented and women as supportive of or protected by male warriors. In this context, participants of both genders related their decisions to leave to not wanting to do military service. Although avoiding military service was more frequently framed as a way of opposing apartheid, some like Sonja presented it as ending their chance to work towards change from within South Africa. Participants who had attended military 'camps' or whose sons had been in the army implied that the experience had been extremely troubling without saying why. These omissions mean it is unclear whether avoiding additional service related to a fear of being harmed or a fear of acting in a way they found, or might find, shameful. Veterans of the war in Vietnam have stated that their reluctance to speak about their experiences stemmed from concern that their views would not be heard due to the unpopularity of the war (Shay, 1995). Shay's finding is particularly relevant to South Africa as the military seems to have been a site in which young white men were forced to come to terms with their own positioning in relation to apartheid (Batley, 2007; Cock, 1993, 1994; Israel, 2002; Thompson, 2006).



These findings suggest that the issues involved in migrations from the country in which one learned to become white will be somewhat different for men and women. However, in the interests of prioritizing an analysis of how racialization informed constructions of migration, gender was not treated as a central focus of the research. This has meant that I have said little about my sense that women's accounts drew more on discourses of family and men on the political, but that this shifted once participants were encouraged to elaborate on aspects of experience they had not raised spontaneously. It has also meant that I have also not discussed how gender seems to have contributed to the way in which I dealt with the boundary between my positioning as scientific observer and confidante. However, as reflected in the work of Lohan (2000) and McKee and O'Brien (1989), my impression is that future research needs to attend to the power dynamics of the space in which researchers and participants mark and maintain gendered boundaries and positions as insiders and outsiders in relation to the intersection between migration and responses to political change.

As mentioned earlier, although I tried to avoid prescribing what was said, the analysis was predicated on the understanding that research interviews are co-constructed and situated in relation to a particular researcher at a particular point in time. It was usually towards the end of the first interview or during the second that participants referred to the development of a newer understanding of how their families had been affected by migration and of the racialization that had

dominated the context in which they had lived. Consequently, these shifts may reflect a greater awareness of the issues I was asking them to consider and/or a response to the 'interventive' (Tomm, 1987, 1988) nature of interviews in which they were required to grapple with issues that might have been unproblematized, unnoticed or laid aside in getting on with life. However, because they tended to involve an acknowledgement of more fractured versions of the self, it is likely that these issues could only be discussed once a greater sense of trust had been established.

As Stanley (1998) suggests, shifts in view are not uncommon when research participants are encouraged to reflect on important aspects of their lives with a researcher. However, it is possible that my experience as a psychotherapist and people's perceptions of what entails meant that they were more willing to consider issues that had been laid aside in the process of getting on with their lives. It is also possible that my position as a white South African migrant increased the likelihood of deciding to introduce more fractured aspects of self into their accounts. If so, they may reflect an appeal for understanding from someone whom the participants imagined has an insider's experience of the struggles white families have faced.

In attempting to deconstruct the racialized claims that underpin portrayals of migrant, family-based, diasporic and gendered identities, it has not been my intention to invalidate what was said. Instead I have tried to identify factors that

seem to contribute to the ways in which different identifications get taken up or refused, and how relatively unnoticed memories become more affectively coloured. Although this thesis cannot provide definitive answers to what might account for reworking past ideas about family and apartheid-based identities, as suggested by Butler (2003, 2006) and Frosh (2006), it seems to require recognizing that the other is as real and vulnerable as oneself, and being prepared to engage with incapacitating versions of the self.

### **8.3 Implications for future research**

This thesis is relevant to three areas of research. First, it has implications for studying migrations that relate to other countries of migration and settlement. Secondly, it has implications for examining responses to other highly politicized contexts in which people have been positioned as beneficiaries of the oppression of others. Thirdly, it has implications for researching other situations in which participants and their families are faced with troubled subject positions. However, it also has implications for psychotherapeutic work with individuals and families whose lives have been affected by migration and other situations in which they are faced with and events that disrupt anticipated experiences of self and other (Altschuler, 2002).

At a methodological level, the thesis illustrated that an adapted version of Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) and Gestalt-based (Rosenthal, 1998)

biographical interpretative methodologies is well-suited to recruiting and analyzing data where the aim is to understand more about an area and extend current theoretical paradigms rather than validate existing theories. It also offers a useful vehicle for researching any area of experience that has been under-researched and issues that are left unsaid. The need to take account of what might be left unsaid is particularly important when attempting to research aspects of experience that place participants in a troubled subject position (Wetherell, 1989) and where the issues under investigation relate to memories that lie beyond consciousness (Hollway and Jefferson, *ibid*; Rosenthal, *ibid*).

The relatively unstructured interview format facilitated this process. It enabled the participants to reflect on, and present their experience in an order that fitted with their own understanding of the past and the image they wished to present. This led to the presentation of accounts that included multiple layers of experience. Using the later part of interviews to probe areas that had been omitted or mentioned fleetingly and then dismissed, enabled me to take account of the more silenced content of what was being presented. As these accounts of migration were by their very nature retrospective, this framework offered a context for exploring how certain versions of the past become privileged and others underplayed in response to situations like changes in the life course and the socio-political contexts in which people live.

The readiness with which participants agreed to participate and the frequency with which they mentioned the unusual and valuable nature of the experience suggests that they welcomed an opportunity to reflect on the more private struggles posed by apartheid-based migrations. Although there were times when participants seemed to present well-worn narratives, the emotive language, hesitancy, repetition, changes in pace and pitch, and in some cases gesture, which marked much of what was said indicate a desire to censor or think carefully about what was said. These markers suggest that the interviews were also used as a forum for grappling with aspects of the past that were less clearly articulated.

At a theoretical level, the thesis supports the importance researchers like Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) and Hollway (2006) place on drawing social constructionist as well as psychoanalytic ideas when researching how identities are not only informed by the social settings in which people live but by internalized experiences of self and other as well. For example, it illustrated the value of using the concept of troubled subject positions to interpret how people worked their positions in relation to the discourses that dominated the contexts in which they live (Wetherell, 1998). It also illustrated the applicability of concepts evolved from psychoanalytic interpretations of identity, to interpreting how responses are informed by internalized and more unconscious experiences of self and other (Benjamin, 1998). However, as indicated in Chapter 1, the evenness with which I drew on these two frameworks in analyzing the data

attests to the complicated nature of this process and accounts for my decision to link these frameworks without attempting to create an over-riding meta-theory.

Although the research focused on migration from apartheid South Africa, certain findings will have relevance to researching how experiences of self and family are informed by migrations to and from other countries. For example, it demonstrated the value of analyzing diverse experiences of family rather than focusing purely on globalized notions of 'the family'. It indicated that factors that are worth exploring in attempting to account for diversities in constructions of migration include considering whether the views expressed related to the position of the migrant or non-migrant; whether the relationship under discussion is with a parent, child or sibling; relational dynamics that pre-date decisions to migrate; prior cultural and family scripts; gender; the embodied nature of migratory claims; and the extent to which change in the life course intersect with portrayals of migration.

Identifying and focusing on these aspects of identity allowed for an in-depth analysis of the subject positions opened by certain aspects of identity. It led to revealing issues that had been under-researched before and considering whether issues that have been theorized in relation to certain experiences of family might be applicable to other family experiences. For example, it revealed that a core issue when in portraying the consequences of migration for intergenerational relationships centres on disruptions to anticipated experiences

of care for elderly parents. This led to recognizing that disruptions to care were often apparent when reflecting on sibling relationships but expressed in a more coded way. It also illustrated the value of interrogating how particular migratory claims are bound up with other identity claims.

By restricting the analysis to a group of participants who had been accorded privileged status by a highly oppressive regime that has since been dismantled, the research was able to explore the intersection between the dispossessions caused by migration and responses to socio-political change. Because South Africa was and remains highly politicized, it illustrated the value of considering how 'race', gender and age-related desires, needs and expectations of self and others are written in and through bodies and the 'performances' they give (Butler, 1990; Probyn, 1993, 1996). As a result, it was able to show how where migrations relate to highly politicized countries, the political may become conflated with internalized and external experiences of family. In discussing the consequences of the collapse of Communism in Easter Europe, Hoffman (1989) proposed that in the future, instead of the Communist era being understood in terms of history, it will be seen as moral drama in which people were forced to take risky and ethical choices. Her proposal is particularly relevant to understanding migrations from South Africa. It means that even if migration is presented as a response to political events, politics may not be the only reason migrants are ambivalent about identifying with their country of origin. It also means that is possible to use the family metonymically to present the nation:

uncertainties about how to deal with troubled subject positions can lead to projecting what is hated or feared onto others, including all or some of one's family.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the decision to prioritize the intersection between racialized identities and aspects of identity that are deemed to be more personal led imposing certain constraints on the sample and the data I chose to interrogate. For example, the sample was restricted to white South Africans, families where migrants and non-migrant parents and siblings had remained engaged with one another's lives; migrations in which the migrant is a parent, people whose first language is English and migrations that took place up until 1990.

Limiting the sample to white South Africans related to a desire to increase understandings of whiteness, and of how individuals who have benefited from an oppressive regime deal with the consequences of the collapse of that system. Focusing on situations where the migrant is a parent was based on an interest in the ways in which people who had lived under apartheid construe the consequences of these migrations for intergenerational experiences of family. The decision to interview only English-speaking white South Africans was partly because, although I speak and understand Afrikaans, I am not sufficiently fluent to pick up nuances of speech. In addition, as much of the current discourse about



apartheid positions those who speak Afrikaans as culpable, I was keen to explore how English speakers make sense of their agency as well.

However, these decisions affected the ideas I present as 'knowledge' about this area of experience. They have meant that the research does not take account of the views of black people whose families have been separated through migration, of migrants who are not parents or who have no contact with South Africa and of Afrikaans speaking white South Africans.

Prioritizing the intersection between the political and personal has also meant that I have not analyzed another three issues in detail. Like me, many migrants framed relationships with partners as central to their experiences of migration. However, in the interests of extending understanding of how constructions of migration are transmitted across the generations, I have not addressed this issue here. Although I have said a great deal about age and generation, with the exception of cross-racialized relationships within the home and the consequences of military conscription, I have said relatively little about gender. In discussing participants' references to a real or imagined death, I showed how death can become a site for reworking a sense of identity based on place. In spite of this, I have said relatively little about the territorialized nature of identities elsewhere in the analysis. However, comments about the contrast between the struggle to adjust to the British climate and glowing descriptions of the South African climate and landscape suggest a desire to claim a site of identification

that was less contested than those associated with other aspects of the country and/or family. This does not mean that I think couple relationships, gender or the territorialized nature of identities have no bearing on these research questions but that they represent other significant areas of research.

It is also important to recognize that these findings, constraints and omissions related to researching a legacy that positioned all white South Africans, including me, as beneficiaries of oppressive practices and positioned all family members who have been separated through migrations as abandoners or abandoned. One of the advantages of insider positions is that the researcher's sense of cultural ease can offer "greater reflexivity and enhanced critical awareness" (Strathern, 1987 p18), enabling her/him to draw on issues that belong to the society under analysis that might otherwise be overlooked. A disadvantage is that it can lead to reiterating the silences the researcher is seeking to interrogate (Raj, 2003). Although there will have been issues I am unlikely to be aware of, analyzing my own positioning illustrated the importance of interrogating how researchers like myself construct, mark and maintain our positions as insiders and outsiders in relation to the issues we are seeking to address:

Being 'in and out' may be a state of mind deeply embedded in some of us, the in-betweenies, but for many it is an actual interstitial state lying on the boundary of academia, a transit camp, a shanty town brought into existence through the issuing of

passport, the patrolling of borders, the careful regulation of movement of peoples, the forceful distinction between true citizens and migrant workers and aliens (Stanley, 1998, p183).

Stanley argues that these regulations do not only structure the relationship between nation states but are social and political processes that are carried out by the guardians of academic life. Attempting to look in from the outside while looking out from the inside carries the risks of labeling those who are interviewed as an ally or projecting what is uncomfortable about our positions onto those we interview.

Although I have said relatively little about the overlaps between this research process and psychotherapy, this thesis has implications for work with people whose families have experienced migration. The above discussion suggests that where psychotherapists have personal histories of migration and/or of living in highly politicized contexts, similar attention needs to be paid to how one's own cultural background, beliefs and life style feed into the desire for closeness and distance in relation to clients and the social realities they represent.

As discussed earlier, although non-discursive markers suggests that these interviews often placed the participants in troubled subject positions in relation to areas of experience that were central to how they see themselves, most referred to the unusual, complicated and value nature of being asked to reflect on their

own experiences of migration. This suggests that the research interviews became a locus through which the status, interpersonal and intrapsychic conflicts arising from migration could be expressed, negotiated and in some cases reworked. This also suggests that reflecting on experiences through the lens of migration holds the possibility of enabling current difficulties to be placed in the context of discourses and subject positions that have been relatively marginalized (Altschuler, 2002).

Whilst this research has answered some questions, it has opened up many more. It has left me with questions about how South Africans who were categorized as racialized inferiors have made sense of the migrations of their own family members. It has also left me with questions about what the next generation might have said had they been interviewed and a desire to know more about what might increase identifications with those deemed to be other, be they racialized others or those defined as other because their positions represent what is envied or aspects of self that are feared and hated.

In ending, I wish to emphasize that the research brings together my family psychotherapy experience with a study that is deeply personalized and politicized. The duality of my insider-outsider positions as migrant and researcher, infused by my positions as daughter, sister and mother has informed the insights I drew on in interpreting how family relationships and a highly-

oppressive political system have affected the lives of those who decided to leave apartheid-based South Africa and those who decided to remain.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 Information Sheet**

#### **The meaning of migration from South Africa to the UK for family life**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

I am a Clinical Psychologist and Family Psychotherapist, based at the Tavistock Clinic, London. I have for a number of years been working with people who have experienced migration to the UK.

As a white, South Africa-born woman, I am acutely aware of the impact immigration has had on my own family life. Although the size of the South African migration to this country has been considerable, there have been few attempts to look at this more closely.

I have therefore decided to interview first generation South Africans to explore their thoughts on how migration has influenced their own lives and the lives of their family. I am also interviewing people who live in South Africa, and have children or siblings who have migrated to the UK.

It is my hope that this will not only contribute to a wider understanding of the South African experience, but will ultimately influence clinical work with families who have experienced migration. The interviews form a central part of an Open University Ph D research project.

My aim is to meet with you on two occasions to hear your views on the meaning of migration for your family. I would expect each interview to last one or two hours.

I would like to make an audiotape of the interview, which will be transcribed for analysis. I would be happy to provide you with the tape of our interview, should you want this.

I would of course be abiding by the ethics regulations of the Tavistock Clinic and any publication arising from this work will ensure that personal details are carefully disguised to ensure anonymity.

Jenny Altschuler`

Ph: 07976278322

## **Appendix 2 Research Consent Form**

I have read the information sheet outlining the project.

I understand that the material is confidential and that in the case of any publication arising from this work, all names and personal details will be significantly altered to ensure anonymity.

I am also aware that a copy of the tapes of the interviews will be made available to me.

If at any stage in the interviews I wish for some sections to be deleted, my wishes will be fully respected.

I therefore consent to:

- participate in an interview on my ideas related to this topic
- the interview being audio-taped and subsequently transcribed
- the interview being used for research purposes only

I am aware that:

- any publication arising from this research will be fully anonymous

Name of participant: .....

Signature of participant: .....

Signature of interviewer: .....

Date: .....

## **Appendix 3 Interview format and probes**

### **A3.1 Migrants**

#### **Opening statement**

I am interested in your thoughts on how immigration to the UK has shaped your family and your own life. How has it influenced your children, your parents, your siblings and yourself? Start wherever you like. I'll listen first without interrupting and take some notes to remind me of things to follow up afterwards. We've got about an hour and a half today, and we will meet again next week or soon after so please take all the time you need.

#### **Opening probes when reluctant to start**

- When did you leave South Africa?
- What was that process like for you?
- What influenced your decision?

#### **Consequences of migration for self and family of procreation**

- How has migration affected your life?

- How has migration influenced relationships with other members of your family, particularly with parents and siblings who remained in South Africa?
- How has migration affected your relationships with your children?
- If I were to ask them what would they say?

### **Prior migrations**

- Were your parents and grandparents born in South Africa?
- Is there any connection with your decision to migrate and these histories of migration?

### **The meaning of leaving South Africa**

- Are the issues you raise particular to South Africa?
- How did your move relate to your being white and/or the political situation in South Africa?
- How has apartheid influenced your family life?
- What does South Africa and being South African mean to you now?
- How has this changed over time?
- What about your children's connection with South Africa?
- What do they know about apartheid?



### **The meaning of migrating to Britain**

- What led you to move to Britain in particular?
- How has coming to Britain influenced your choices and identity?
- Are there any connections between your being an immigrant and the family and friendships you have formed in Britain?
- Has migration opened up or constrained your opportunities at work?
- How have your views changed over time?

### **Memories of cross-racialized experiences of care**

- Was there anyone outside of the family who was important to you when you were growing up?
- Did you have a nanny who helped to look after you?

### **Possible additional probes**

- If you were giving advice about migrating, what would you say?
- Is there anything you wish to add?



### **A3.2 Non-migrants**

#### **Opening statement**

I am interested in the ways in which migration has influenced your family, your relationships with your children, grandchildren/siblings and yourself. Start wherever you like. I'll listen first without interrupting. I'll just take some notes to remind me of things to follow up afterwards. We've got about an hour and a half today, and will meet again next week or soon after, so please take all the time you need.

#### **Opening probes when reluctant to start without guidance**

- When did your child (sibling) leave?
- What was that process like for you?
- What influenced their decision to leave and your decision to remain?
- Is this an experience you share with friends?

#### **Consequences for self and family**

- How has your child's (sibling's) migration influenced your own life?
- What has it meant for her/him?

- How has migration changed things between you and her/him?
- How do you think having parents who are immigrants has influenced your grandchildren's (niece/nephew's) lives?
- What might your grandchildren (niece/nephew) say about how this has influenced them as a family?

### **Prior migrations**

- Were you, your parents and grandparents born in South Africa?
- Is there any connection between this history and migrations from South Africa?

### **Meanings associated with leaving South Africa**

- Are the issues you raise particular to South Africa?
- How did the move relate to being white and/or the political situation in South Africa?
- How has apartheid influenced your family life?
- What does South Africa and being South African mean to you now?
- How has this changed over time?
- What about your grandchildren's (nieces/nephew's) connection with South Africa?

### **Memories of cross-racialized experiences of care**

- Was there anyone else outside of the family who was important to your child (sibling and you) when they (you) were growing up?
- Was there a nanny who helped to look after them (and you)?

### **Additional possibilities**

- If you were giving advice about what it is like when a child or sibling migrates, what would you say?
- Is there anything you wish to add?

## **Appendix 4 Research Pro Forma**

**1 Initials**

**2 Location**

**3 Age**

**4 Sex**

**5 Employment**

**6 Marital status/history (*marriage/ongoing relationships*)**

**7 Family of origin (*genogram?*)**

**8 Children/grandchildren**

**9 Health**

**10 Date of leaving SA**

**11 Date of arriving in UK**

**12 Parent/grandparents/previous generations arrival in SA**

**13 Anxieties or key events mentioned spontaneously**

**14 Interviewer/interviewee relationship**

**15 Additional comments**

*These items are not probes and need not be considered unless they arise during the course of the interview.*

### **Appendix 5 Max: Pen portrait**

Max is 78 years old. His wife died relatively recently, having been ill for a number of years. He has a son Raymond, who lives in Britain with his South African-born wife and two children, and a daughter Sue who lives in South Africa, albeit living in a different town. The interview was held in his home where his interaction with a domestic worker suggests that she plays a significant role in his life.

Max began by saying: "I'm an immigrant myself [...] I must say this - I've always been keen for my children to (*long pause*) be mobile and not be (*long pause*) carry some patriotic - chauvinistic baggage". He explained that the army was the catalyst for his son's leaving but that:

"Immigration is always a bit of - er political and economic necessity and the other thing is just a - er -sense of adventure - and I say it was the great um regret um when I left home in 1936 I left my mother and my sisters in Nazi Germany - and so - I was more interested in the ... adventure and experience of - getting to a foreign country and quite callous actually."

This start is indicative of the themes that dominate Max's account. Reflecting on son's migration seems to place him at several points in time and in different subject positions. It positions him as a parent who has been able to deal with the



disruptions caused by his son's migration with relatively little difficulty. It also positions him as a young man who left his own family and country (Germany) shortly before the Nazi's came to power, and as someone who is better able to understand the impact of his own migration on the family he left behind as a result of his son's migration.

Max's position as a Jew forms the backdrop to much of his account. He was born in Germany, left in his early twenties and arrived in South Africa the year before the country closed its doors to immigrants from Europe, 1936. His reference to "Nazi Germany" alludes to the victimization of Jews. He also mentions what appears to be a newer understanding: regret that "er the sense of adventure" associated with his migration meant that he did not consider what his leaving meant for his family. Subsequent references to his wife's death suggest that it has added to his understanding of what it means to have been left.

Nonetheless, these are positions only he can hold: when I use his own words "spirit of adventure" or refer to his regret, he reminds me that he was speaking about leaving Nazi-dominated Germany. These responses suggest a desire to gain greater control over his narrative and defence against the possibility that I might have thought he had a choice. This sense of being judged by another does not only appear to relate to my position as a researcher. It seems to be bound up with memories of his mother. He reports her as saying "it's not going to be as bad - you know. It will soon - blow over" before mentioning friends who were sent to

concentration camps and did not survive. His need to justify his stance by implying that had he stayed he might not have survived suggests that he remains, or has become, increasingly concerned about leaving. This sense of being found wanting in her eyes is evident elsewhere. He reports that when they met after the war, she was disappointed about how much he had changed and South African he had become. Critical comments about the "Victorian" values of his family suggest that migration also allowed him to escape from a family he viewed, or has come to view, as restrictive.

Despite occasional references to regret, Max's account is primarily one of personal success won against a backdrop of difficult circumstances. Loss, disappointment and problems tend to be pathologized and associated with others. He frames his wife, rather than him, as missing their son and offers mocking descriptions of the "when we's", of German and Zimbabwean immigrants who hark back to what they lost and how life had been better before. There are points when hesitations and qualifiers suggest personal loss and disappointment. However, when asked to elaborate, he changes the focus, often adopting the position of a teacher instructing me on the Holocaust.

Max contests his position as a German throughout his account. Unlike other German immigrants, he learnt to speak English without a German accent, was accepted as part of the society to which he moved within a short time and was naturalized earlier than others were. References to the "torrid times" of people

who did not survive suggest that this decision reflected his own desire to distance himself from the position of oppressor and appear less foreign in a society in which Germans were officially designated 'aliens'. However, as this includes distancing himself from other German Jews, it also suggests a sense of survivor guilt. It reflects a desire to avoid being seen as part of a group who survived the trauma other Jews were unable to escape.

There are many illustrations of how central his German heritage is to him. For example, his drive to become a naturalized South Africa was because his wife did not want to marry someone with German citizenship. Their marriage seems to have represented the possibility of dis-identifying with his position as German. However, it also meant that within their relationship he was at risk of appearing shameful. Although it is not unusual for migrants to show greater interest in exploring their ancestral roots when they are older, in Max's case, there are suggestions that his wife's death allowed him to reclaim aspects of his German past he had downplayed before.

Max also downplays his position as a German when discussing his relationship with his children. For example, because he did not have a strong accent, wear strange clothes or look different he doubts they saw him as foreign. However, he takes pride in certain aspects of his position as a German. He refers more than once to how being born in Germany gave his son access to a German passport and subsequently EU citizenship. He tells a story that suggests he is proud that a

stranger was able to recognize that his son was European in his outlook. He is critical of other white South Africans' obsession with sport, and stresses the value of having brought his children up to feel they did not have to be "patriotic or chauvinistic". Nonetheless, despite indicating that he had given his children encouragement to leave, when his son left he said he was going for a holiday in Britain and only called later to say he was not returning.

This sense of contesting the extent to which identities are rooted in any one particular country is similarly evident in discussing his grandchildren'. He views his grandchildren (aged six and eight) as unaffected by their parents' migration, doubts they know why his son and their mother left the country and says that they live in a "cosmopolitan" town. He describes himself as "well known" to them: they speak on the phone, their parents use photos to keep memories of him and his wife alive and his daughter-in-law helps him to reconnect with his grandchildren when he goes to Britain. However, references to a need to adopt such strategies and framing them as "little English children" serve as reminders of how different life might have been had they lived closer to one another.

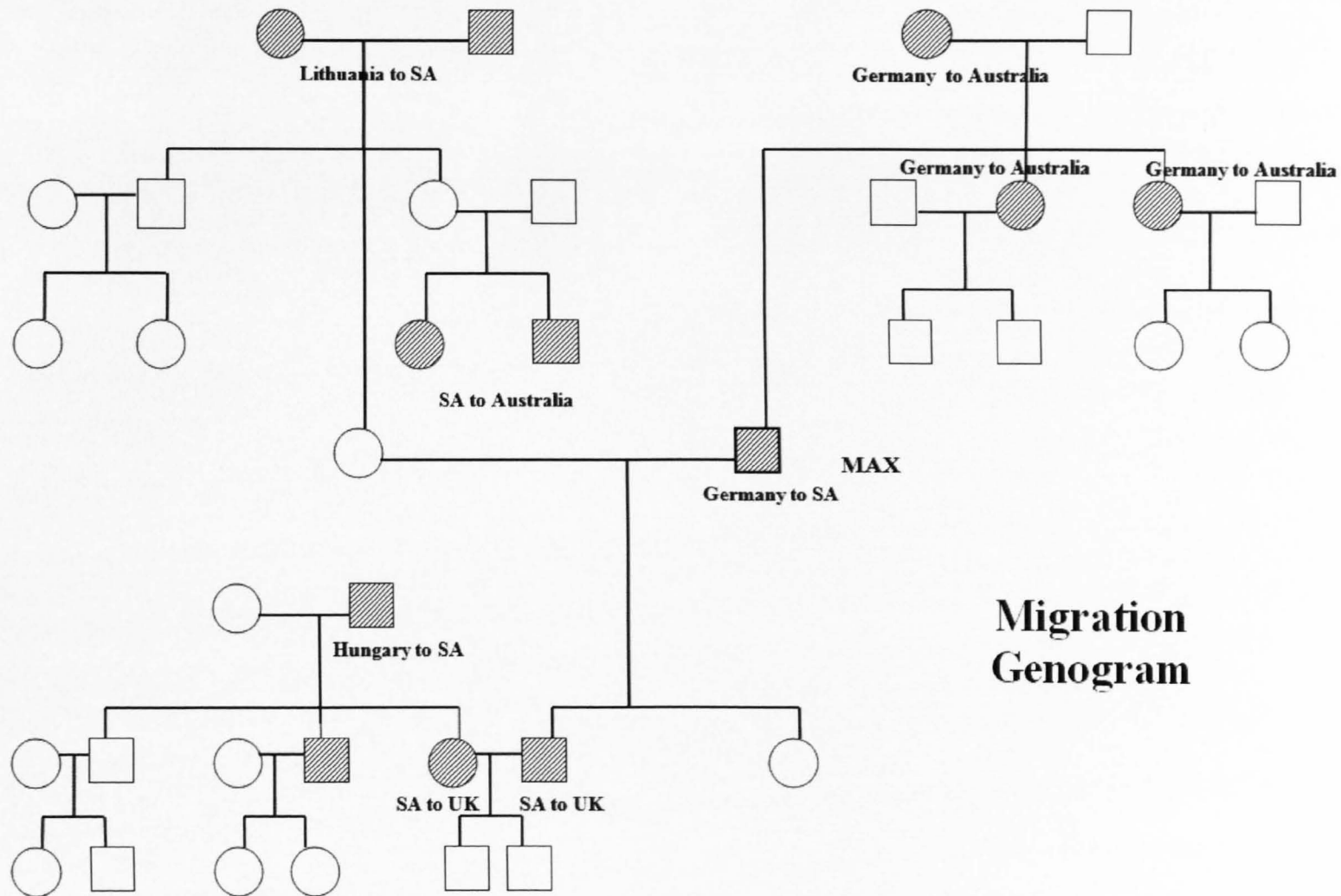
Max's comment "I'm an immigrant myself" seems to reflect a desire to dis-identify with a position he finds uncomfortable. He frames migrants and their children as more successful than the rest of the population. This contrast is apparent in comparing his children, Raymond and Sue: Raymond is framed as extremely successful in all aspects of his life but the opposite is true of his depiction of his daughter. She is described as having had a series of unsatisfactory relationships.

Rather than viewing her decision to stay as a conscious choice, it is framed as an indication that she was less able to move.

Max moves interchangeably between white migrants (Jews and Greeks) and black migrations to and from South Africa in framing their experiences in heroic terms. Linking the position of Jews and Greeks with black migrants suggests a desire to obscure the differences between migrants who are and are not beneficiaries of racialized privilege.

His position as a Jew underpins much of what he says about apartheid, suggesting that migration and the risk of victimization have been integral to what it means to be a white South African Jewish family. This framing serves to legitimate his son's decision to follow his own model and migrate from a country that felt unsafe and uncomfortable. There are times when he links apartheid and the Nazi regime. However, these links are discussed in an abstract way and are marked by frequent qualifiers and hesitations. This suggests that identifying with the position of "immigrant" reflects a desire to frame him as not belonging to the society that had been a refuge from Nazi oppression.

The notion of success and failure was stressed throughout his account. For example, it was evident in the way he contrasted migrants and non-migrants. It also seemed to inform his response to participating in this research. At one point he asked whether the research was aimed at establishing whether migrants have more problems than non-migrants and who would migrate most successfully.



## Migration Genogram

### Appendix 6 Migration Genogram